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COMMONWEAL

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Economic issues in the campaign
Charles K. Wilber

WHAT'S MISSING FROM THIS PICTURE?
An interview with Norman Lear
Thomas M. Landy

THEY JUST DON'T GET IT: from one prospective first lady to another
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Richard Alleva

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CORRESPONDENCE

Things look great

Morristown, N.J.

To the Editors: Congratulations on the issue of September 11, with its fine supplement on the laity. The great Newman is still very much alive.

MARTIN J. BURNE, O.S.B.

Things look awful

Aptos, Calif.

To the Editors: Your issue of September 11 was so upsetting I had to read it twice and blink several times. So much depressing news. Things I had felt were true and here was more evidence to prove that they were. The disappearance of a Catholic elementary and secondary school system in the United States is now paying dividends: lapsed Catholics, selective morality, submergence of everything into the Mammon culture. Will we touch bottom before we begin to surface?

WILLIAM A. GRANT

You left us out

Boston, Mass.

To the Editors: Your otherwise excellent special supplement on the laity [September 11] suffers from a striking omission. Since 1977, when the "Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern" was issued, what was then a little-noticed group of Catholics committed to peace, disarmament, and nonviolence has become a significant force in American Catholicism, claiming a membership of 10,000 or more, including a large number of religious and clergy and about a hundred bishops and archbishops. It remains as it began, a lay movement with clergy and bishops participating *as members*, neither claiming nor enjoying preference or distinction on grounds of ecclesiastical status. Pax Christi USA today is nationwide in its activities, with regional, collegiate, and parochial chapters promoting its five priorities, and is recognized as such in the *Official Catholic Directory* listing.

The incidental references made by some of your contributors to the 1983 peace pastoral might well have noted that it was Pax Christi bishops who initiated the proposal for the pastoral and that two of the bishops charged with drafting the pastoral were Pax Christi members.

Other Catholic peace groups, too, deserved recognition they did not receive. The Catholic Peace Fellowship provided invaluable counseling and support service in the Vietnam and Gulf conflicts to young Catholics who chose the still unpopular option of conscientious objection. Nor should we ignore the more dramatic direct activism of the various Plowshares "actions," the continuing heritage of the Berrigans' "Great Catholic Peace Conspiracy" of the Vietnam years.

Though striking, the omission is, alas, not surprising. Given its increasingly obvious editorial commitment to what might best be described as national security pragmatism, the "new" *Commonweal* may not regard such lay/clerical/episcopal cooperation on peace and disarmament issues as acceptable Catholic action worthy of mention. GORDON C. ZAHN

The writer, a cofounder of Pax Christi USA, was awarded the title of Ambassador of Peace at the organization's August Assembly.

You missed our point

Delran, N.J.

To the Editors: The Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church [ARCC] is grateful for the editorial petition for increased membership [September 11]. The essays in the special supplement reflected a fine range of viewpoints on the role of the laity in the church.

It is precisely because so many Catholics are now in positions of responsibility in society that the church must get its act together internally. We should be making a difference out there. The daily headlines tell us otherwise. Catholics cannot be strengthened to live the gospel in the secular world if the source of their sustenance is a church plagued by pastoral cruelty, homiletic ineptitude, and injustice. The rich beauty of its tradition and sacramental life will be lost if we allow this to continue.

Many middle-aged Catholics were formed by the great lay movements of the '40s and '50s as well as by the religious education that flourished in those years. We were ready for Vatican II—the curia was not. Instead of helping the church to move into the twenty-first century with the teachings of Vatican II, the curia continues to resist every movement of the Spirit. It is only natural that the training of our youth prompts us to take action in the form of reform movements to combat the inertia.

To say that reform movements like ARCC have an "obsessive preoccupation with the church's structures and processes" is a rash generalization. We take our jobs in the secular world very seriously as ministerial opportunities. We need the church. We need its sacramental life. We need healthy faith communities. These are the gifts the church can offer us in our efforts to bring the gospel into the marketplace. This will not happen until there are new structures which operate on a just gospel model and which grant equality to all. MARY LOUISE HARTMAN

The writer is president of ARCC.

(Continued on page 30)

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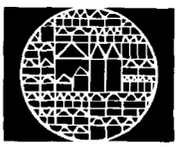

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Promises, promises

There would not seem to be much to choose from between the bombast and xenophobia of the Republican convention in Houston and the Democrats' strident prochoice rally in New York. The Republican attempt to turn so-called "family values" into the bugle call for a "religious war" has been met with scorn by the majority of voters. The Democrats' equating of abortion-on-demand with the emancipation of women remains deeply offensive to many. Neither party offers a morally coherent vision. Yet choose we must.

Battered by the longest recession since the Depression, there is some indication that Americans are demanding something more than a horse race from President George Bush and Governor Bill Clinton. They want to know where these horses are going. Clinton's lead in the opinion polls suggests that his call for change is getting a sympathetic hearing from voters who, pollsters tell us, nevertheless remain undecided and uneasy about Clinton himself. Despite his command of the issues, Clinton is dogged by his evasive answers about avoiding the draft and by his listeners' frank skepticism about the many promises he makes. Clinton is knowledgeable and articulate, but in seeming to have an answer to every question he risks appearing glib. Issues and programs are important. But at some irreducible level the election of a president is indeed about character, and Clinton's "character" remains largely unknown and suspect. Luckily for the Arkansas governor, President Bush's political cynicism and inertia when it comes to domestic problems raise plenty of questions about character as well.

Whatever the caliber of Bush and Clinton, this election is pivotal to the nation's future. With the end of the cold war, the purpose and scope of America's role in the world have to be rethought. Our economic hegemony has also diminished. Social disarray and educational failure have put us at a distinct disadvantage in the new global economy (*see* Wilber, pp. 11-16). Americans are working harder and earning less. While it is true that much of the industrial world is also suffering economic hardship, it is also a fact that the average U.S. worker has made little if any economic progress for over a decade. We have borrowed billions to sustain our standard of living.

In short, we are living beyond our means—and have been for quite some time. The next president will have to make unpopular decisions and ask real sacrifices in order to reinvigorate the economy, reeducate the work force, and revitalize our common life. Despite Clinton's talk about "industrial policy" and "investment in infrastructure" and Bush's exhortations to unleash "entrepreneurial capitalism," neither candidate has said the hard things that need saying. The federal deficit, the burden runaway health-care costs impose on government and industry alike, the conditions of urban America, and the tough times likely ahead demand honest talk from both candidates.

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Clinton promises billions for highways, research and development, education, and job training—much of it needed to be sure—but his explanations of where the money is going to come from are specious. He is silent about restraining middle-class entitlements such as Medicare. His proposal to modestly raise the taxes of people making over $200,000 doesn't come close to paying for what he proposes to do. Bush is recycling the discredited notion of supply-side economics, arguing that lower taxes will spur the economy and thus increase federal revenues. "Mr. Bush is promising tax cuts he cannot deliver and Mr. Clinton is promising growth he cannot deliver," notes the *Economist*.

We've seen what Bush can do domestically. Whether Clinton can avoid the same fate if elected is an open question. Would President Clinton be able to say "No" to his supporters—teacher, public employee, and health-care unions, etc.—when it comes time to make the public schools more flexible and accountable, reform welfare, limit health-care spending, and further tax or curtail Social Security benefits for the better off? Whether Clinton can bring greater efficiency and direction to government spending and planning is anyone's guess.

Bush or Clinton faces a very "new" world order abroad. The world may not be a much safer place than it was when the Soviet Union and the United States were locked in mortal ideological conflict, but it is surely a different place. We have moved, it seems fair to say, from a bipolar to a multipolar world. Nationalism isn't dead—indeed, it's enjoying a revival—but an opportunity exists for the United States to lead the way to greater international cooperation on questions of war and peace, arms control, trade, the environment, and ameliorating the disparities between rich and poor nations. Bush's foreign policy accomplishments are real enough. But in the new global economy where industrial nations will increasingly confront one another as equals, leadership will require a coherent sense of our own domestic priorities and values. America's singular role in the world need not be shunned, but it would be the worst sort of hubris to think we can be persuasive abroad if hamstrung by turmoil and economic crises at home. Clinton's advocacy of a disciplined but active role for government at least takes the urgency of our present predicament seriously. Bush's attempt to provoke the electorate's resentment toward intrusive government—while dispensing billions in election-year pork—shows why even conservatives find him something of a cipher. Neither man may be up to the challenges ahead, but the most unrealistic promise of all is the idea that we can steer through new and dangerous political waters without a clear idea of where we want to go (yes, the vision thing) or an engaged captain on the bridge.

"I like everything else okay, but I miss the politics."

ET CETERA

A REMARKABLE COINCIDENCE *Commonweal* columnist David R. Carlin, Jr.—yes, the scourge of moral relativists/subjectivists, cultural liberals/elitists, abortion-rights absolutists who parade as Democrats, Republicans who parade in any guise, and other forms of spiritual corruption—won a three-way race for the Democratic party's nomination for Congress in Rhode Island last month. As a reward, we allowed him to skip his column in this issue.

Carlin's margin of victory—300 votes—is surprisingly close to the number of *Commonweal* subscribers in Rhode Island. We ask the prospective congressman to ponder this remarkable coincidence, and not to forget his old friends once he ascends the Capitol steps in Washington, D.C. Keep those second-class mailing rates low, Mr. Congressman! First, of course, Carlin must defeat a well-financed Republican incumbent in the November election. As a nonprofit organization, *Commonweal* is not permitted to endorse political candidates. Suffice it to say, we have every confidence in Rhode Island's voters.

BESIDES, HE'S NOT EVEN DEAD Any part of the bodily remains of a saint can be designated as a sacred relic. Something intimately connected with the life of the saint (e.g., a glove) is considered a second-class relic, and any object that has been touched to the saint's body is a third-class relic. All this came to mind when we saw a display ad in the *Washington Post, National Weekly Edition* announcing that for a mere $150, plus $9.95 for postage and handling, you can get "a section of the platform where President Bush stood at the 1992 Republican National Convention." You may well question whether the platform in question is the rhetorical one Mr. Bush more or less rose above or the physical platform he literally stood upon. Even assuming the latter, there is uncertainty whether the platform section qualifies even as a third-class relic, since it's our impression that the man wore shoes for the occasion. No company name or address is given, only an 800 phone number. We're not going to repeat the number here, however, because of a warning in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*: "The buying and selling of relics, even in good faith, is simony and gives rise to an excommunication reserved to the ordinary of the place."

QUOD SCRIPSI, SCRIBBLSKI In a reflection on handwriting (London *Tablet*, July 4), the poet and songwriter

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Sydney Carter recalls that, as a teacher, he once found it impossible to decipher what a boy had written in his exercise book. "Impatiently, I wrote something angry in the margin. The boy whose book it was came to me and said, 'Please sir, I cannot read what you have written.' Neither could I, now I came to look at it. What *had* I written? Suddenly, I remembered. It was the word 'ILLEGIBLE!'"

AN EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

PLASTIC OR PRINCIPLE?

TO CHOOSE OR NOT TO CHOOSE

My father told me never to get a credit card. It was in the early 1960s and the oil companies were after him to take out a card. "If you can't afford to pay for gas," he said, "you shouldn't be driving." He frowned on the whole idea of buying on credit. In the 1920s, he prospered enough while working several jobs to build a new house for his parents. He paid for it in cash, and forty years later still had the carpenters' receipts to prove it.

Nor was I initiated into the world of plastics when I spent time with the Franciscans and then the Catholic Worker. In fact, I was a bit surprised when my father finally capitulated to an oil company and began carrying its card. He was concerned about my mother having a blowout on the freeway, and he was right.

Car trouble was also why Kathleen and I finally decided to go plastic. It must have been five years ago. We were expecting friends from out of town, but they arrived late—a day late. Both accomplished lawyers, they had been unable to rent a car the day before because they had forgotten to bring a credit card to the rental agency. At the time, our own car was breaking down chronically and we had always figured that in an emergency we could at least rent a car for a day. But with no credit—we were living a life of "voluntary simplicity" at the time—and no credit card, our friends' experience indicated that option was out of the question. We decided we had better apply for a card.

It didn't turn out to be easy. Our bank didn't offer one, and we were boycotting a number of other banks and oil companies at the time, for their involvement in South Africa. So we went cardless, until 1989, when we received a solicitation in the mail that seemed to answer our needs and satisfy some of our scruples. The mailing was from Working Assets, a group based in San Francisco. Their literature stated that their credit card and other services (phone and travel options) "work for peace, human rights, and the environment...every time you use them." In a brochure titled "Tools for Practical Idealists"—what better pitch to a utopian thirsty for legitimation—we were informed that a Working Assets card was "plastic with principles": "When you first use your Working Assets [card], we donate $2 to nonprofit organizations working for peace, human rights, a cleaner environment, and aid to the hungry. Then, every time you use your card...we donate another 5 cents to the same progressive groups. All at no cost to you." There was a list of groups, forty all told, which had received funding since 1986.

It was very impressive, and even though we knew the part about "at no cost to you" was an equivocation, the annual fee was modest and a second card was free. We filled out the application, glad to know that someone in the credit card business was skimming off a little of the cream and sending it to the Trust for Public Land or Neighbor to Neighbor. But even more surprising, we were quickly issued cards.

They've come in handy. I don't know how many whales we have saved, but after a year or two our credit line was raised. Each month, along with a list of debits, the bill included a piece of "practical idealism" printed at the top of the statement. "Saving the environment begins with you," it said one month. "Recycle, conserve energy, celebrate Earth Day...and use your Working Assets cards instead of cash or checks." Or there was a plug for one of the other services: "Touch-tone for the ozone! Working Assets Long Distance turns your phone into a tool for social change." Or, "Rainforest Action Network says 1-2 acres of rain forest disappear each second! You could win a trip to Costa Rica's rain forests by using Working Assets Travel Service...."

And then there was the democratic aspect: each year, by choosing among groups listed on a ballot, you got to help select those who would get a piece of the Working Assets pie. You could even suggest names to be added to next year's ballot, and your comments were solicited on this year's nominees. (The pool to be divided in 1991 amounted to over $500,000 and was apportioned among thirty-six groups; the amount of each award was determined by the number of votes each received.) We voted dutifully.

On this year's ballot, however, we were troubled by an even greater emphasis than usual on the number of prochoice groups nominated for support. We had known from the start that such groups as Planned Parenthood and Population Crisis Committee were on the ballot and regularly won support, even though not ours. But this year's ballot seemed to be even more weighted toward prochoice issues. So when I mailed back our ballot, I wrote a note asking why only groups favoring abortion were on the ballot and added, "Where is your sense of choice?"

An answer came indirectly. In its spring newsletter, Working Assets published a number of comments it had received in response to this year's ballot. Someone had written (there were no attributions), "Thanks for putting Greenpeace on the list." It was countered by the following: "Take Greenpeace off. They spend too much on overhead and too little on action." And so back and forth on a variety of issues and nominees, without editorial comment. Until this pair: "More prochoice groups!" followed by "Why do you offer only pro-abortion groups? Where is your sense of choice?"

Here Working Assets drew the line. In green ink it offered its only corrective: "Working Assets is not pro-abortion but pro-

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women's rights. We believe that women, not the government, should decide whether or not to bear children. 'Prolife' groups would take away that right to choose."

The message, while admirably succinct, was simplistic. It seemed to by-pass any consideration of what might actually be the consequence of that wrenching choice—the termination of a human life. Further, Working Assets' characterization of pro-life groups was simply one-dimensional and misleading. I don't imagine that Feminists for Life or *Harmony*—an independent journal which supports the "seamless garment" approach to moral and political issues—would get many votes on a Working Assets ballot, but I don't see why they couldn't be included. If choice means anything, particularly on a ballot, it ought to mean there are alternatives.

There is, of course, a choice for card holders, and after this month's bill, we are seriously considering it. "Abortion rights—and women's lives—are at risk," reads this month's statement. "Support the Freedom of Choice Act by returning the enclosed [post] card. We'll send it to your senators....Thanks for caring!"

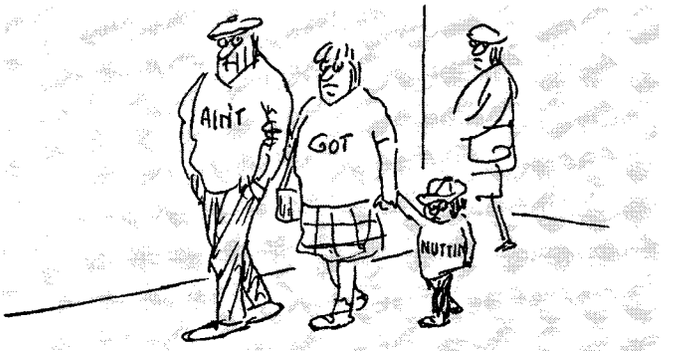
But "caring," like choice, requires discrimination. So at the moment we are thinking about returning a different card.

PATRICK JORDAN

CAMPAIGN '92

PAYING FOR VALUES

THE REAL NEEDS OF REAL FAMILIES



CBS-TV recently reported that only one in three children is now raised in a two-parent home. That is just one indicator of the present instability of the American family. According to data assembled for the"Family Agenda''—an evaluation of the current status of the family by the independent social-service agency, Family Service America—43 percent of those children who live with only their mothers grow up poor. These children are inherently "at risk.'' Still, the Republican party's "family values'' rhetoric, enunciated most volubly by Vice-President Dan Quayle, continues to focus on the symptoms of the problem—voluntary single parenting à la Murphy Brown, for example—and refuses to look honestly at the overall disease of family disintegration. Consequently, the patients tend to be blamed while the plague goes uncured.

That plague is too real to be reduced to fodder for partisan politics. Seventy-five percent of all American school-age children live in families where either both parents work or the sole parent works, and over 6 million of these children must care for themselves at least part of the day. The ideal family of a mother and father, with one working and the other raising children, accounts for only 10 percent of our current family population, according to the Connecticut Council of Family Service Agency.

In his now famous comments on the TV character Murphy Brown, the vice-president suggested that these conditions are to a large extent voluntarily assumed, and that Murphy Brown's choice to be a single parent mirrors similar choices being made across the nation. But as an attorney who often does divorce work, I know better. Almost to a person, my clients honor the old "Ozzie and Harriet'' family model Quayle and others say is under ideological attack. I see little evidence of a shift in values among most Americans. My clients would love to establish a stable relationship, where one parent could elect to raise children, rather than work. However, the pressures of day-to-day life in our country make that ambition increasingly unattainable.

Dan Quayle could do a lot more to help many Americans achieve the kind of family and values he claims to speak for. The Family Agenda has defined public policy areas where government can assist families and thus promote the social stability most Americans desire and children need. First, social service programs should be analyzed from the perspective of their potential impact on families; we have had enough federal and state programs that inadvertently reward families for breaking up or mothers for remaining single. Second, minimum levels of income, health care, nutrition, and shelter should be established and funded. We need to recognize some hard economic facts. If we don't provide a basic level of income support, fewer families will escape poverty, and the children of those families will most likely be caught in the same trap. Lastly, we must see that the knowledge and social services that enable families to care for themselves are made readily available.

A real commitment to families will require conservatives as well as those currently fed up with government inefficiencies to rethink their resistance to government activism. Without help from government, the struggle to preserve "family values'' will surely be lost in the face of larger economic and social pressures.

Let me provide a personal example. One of my friends counsels single women who head households. Her job is to help them learn the skills necessary to run a home and raise children. She is increasingly dismayed by how difficult these seemingly everyday tasks are to master in today's world. Many of her clients live on welfare, and the monthly check does not cover the costs of housing, utilities, and food. Furthermore, the parents most at risk—minority women—also suffer from economic dis-

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crimination because of their race and sex. Most of the jobs available to my friend's clients are poorly paid. Given their family responsibilities, few have the confidence that they will be able to maintain their jobs once they get them. Moreover, while these women are on welfare, the state pays for medical care, but once they take a minimum-wage job they lose that medical coverage. We need a health-care program that will aid, not discourage, parents who want to break out of poverty.

Our hit-and-miss system of medical insurance exacerbates family problems unnecessarily. The National Commission on Children found that 32 million Americans, including 8.3 million children under the age of eighteen, were without health insurance coverage in 1991. Approximately 13 percent of children and 9 percent of pregnant women are not covered. If a family member is struck with a major disease these families are permanently impaired. Our families need universal health care. The Bush administration wants to finance such a program with tax credits, but the families most in need do not have sufficient tax liabilities or disposable incomes to take advantage of this plan.

We also need more treatment programs for substance abusers, programs for those prone to violence, and shelters for the victims of domestic violence. Similarly, we need training for judicial and social service personnel about the nature and dynamics of child and spousal abuse.

But even families not marred by violence or self-destructive behavior are finding it difficult to make ends meet. Families where one or both of the parents must work cannot begin to provide adequate care when a family member becomes disabled. Alzheimer's disease, AIDS, and other disabilities disrupt families and force them either to quit work or to combine care giving with various part-time jobs. Given these realities, especially as the baby-boomer generation takes on the responsibility of caring for their elderly parents, we need in-home support services, respite care, day care, and meals-on-wheels now more than ever. Obviously, any serious dedication to "family values" would support parental leave legislation, which President George Bush recently vetoed while putting forth his own limited proposal.

The Family Agenda I have outlined will be costly. However, if we are serious about "family values," and if we are going to do more than mourn or condemn their demise, we must invest in the family as it exists now. That means dealing with poverty, sexism, racism, and medical care. Americans must embrace a larger sense of "family" than that evoked by the image of "Ozzie and Harriet." Instead of holding up the mythical perfect family in a way that divides us, political leaders need to speak out on behalf of needy individuals and their families wherever and however they exist. If we are to break the cycle of dependence and hopelessness afflicting so many Americans, we must deal with the real needs of today's families.

TIMOTHY D. BATES

Timothy D. Bates is a member of the board of directors of the Family Foundation of North America, an independent fundraising corporation associated with Family Service America of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

REPORT FROM OREGON

DESIGNING A STREAM

MOTHER NATURE'S LITTLE HELPERS

"Everything is going to have to be put back."
—W.S. Merwin, "Unchopping a Tree."

Scott and I are splashing up Portland Creek in hip-waders looking at logs the Forest Service has cabled to boulders all up and down the stream, as far as the eye can see. Old-growth forest stretches away on either side of us, part of a Spotted Owl Habitat Conservation Area set aside in the Willamette National Forest outside of Eugene. The water is low, exposing the surface of the streambed. The scarred logs are placed at carefully determined angles every few feet, some pointing upstream, some perpendicular. Cables bristle from their ends. It all looks like some sort of odd playground equipment. Behind us, a dozen men in red hardhats are standing in the stream drilling holes in

COMMONWEAL BUSINESS MANAGER

In the next six months, we will be adding a business manager to our staff. We are looking for someone to pursue the business interests of the magazine with vigor and intelligence, someone with promotion and business skills committed to working with a small staff and a limited budget to ensure the financial future of *Commonweal*. Previous experience with a magazine, small business, or nonprofit organization is a plus.

The business manager will work with the publisher and staff on a wide variety of business tasks. Initially those tasks will focus on marketing and promotion. Ultimately the job will include responsibility for circulation, promotion, fund-raising, development, and general business matters as well as supervising the business staff.

Anyone interested should send a résumé and a letter describing suitability for the position and acquaintance, if any, with the magazine. Please include references and salary requirement.

Readers are invited to join in our search by passing on this announcement or by letting us know of potential candidates.

Applications or suggestions should be sent to:

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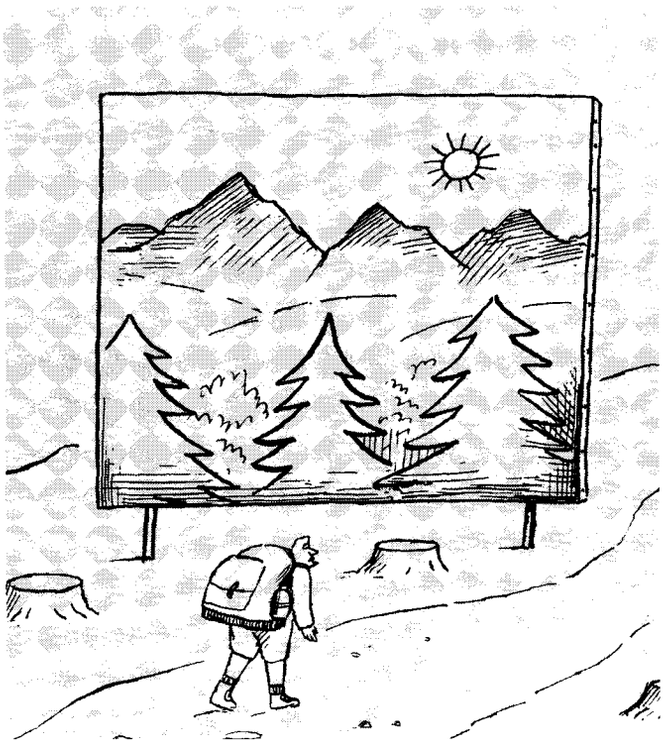
boulders to anchor the log cables, the racket of the large drills filling the air. A couple of Forest Service supervisors stand around on the bank, scribbling on clipboards. What impresses me is both the incongruity of the sight—the ugly lashings beneath the huge alder and fir—and the scale of it, the sheer numbers of logs angled and tagged.

Earlier in the summer, giant excavators and rubber-tired skidders had powered up and down the stream, bringing in logs from other parts of the forest and boulders dynamited from a distant quarry. Equipment and crews of men were jumbled up everywhere, the creek-bed like a big-city construction site, full of shouting and exhaust fumes.

Decades ago and further upstream, Scott explains, loggers finished up a large harvesting operation by removing all the logs and woody debris from the water—standard practice for the timber industry then. The idea was to leave things clean. But scientists have discovered now that woody debris creates pools, "riffles," and "glides" that fish and other wildlife need to keep from being swept away. Wood creates "resistance," adds "roughness." It builds "structure." Sill logs and other kinds of logs dam up silt and gravel, too, which provide necessary spawning habitat. And the sill logs trap leaves and other organic matter which feed the insects that feed the fish.

The irony on Portland Creek is that it's against the law to cut trees in a Spotted Owl Habitat Conservation Zone, even for stream restoration. The logs have to be hauled in like steel girders. They have to be cabled to boulders, artificially fixed, to keep them from being washing away in the spring run-off: random debris replicated only through precise measurement, deliberate placement.

It was September as we walked up the stream, early fall leaves swirling over the structures Scott helped engineer. At the bottom of one deep pool—a "P 5" Scott labeled it—alder leaves shone like pennies. Scott is a "co-op" student with the Forest Service, studying for a master's in Fisheries and Wildlife at Oregon State, a good-looking man in his early thirties, quiet and considered. He had spent the summer working as a designated "stream designer" out of the Lowell Ranger Station, first counting the fish in the stream (shocking pools with an electro-shocker and counting the fish that floated up), then directing the "installation" of the logs according to a complex computer-generated map, then tagging and marking each log, carefully recording its position and purpose. At intervals he returns to see if each installation has met its "objectives," though eventually, if the project works, many of the logs will be buried by the silt and gravel they've built up.



The conceptual artist Cristo ringed a Florida island with sheets of pink fabric and later stretched a cloth fence twenty miles long across the fields of Northern California. As I unstrapped my hipwaders by the side of the jeep it seemed to me for a moment that the cabling of the logs and the designing of the stream was no less a kind of "environmental art," improbable, even absurd—and wonderful, too. It's hard not to admire something so apparently crazy.

I realize that the government's motives are not aesthetic or distinterested (neither are Cristo's; he makes a small fortune marketing swatches of his fabrics). The designing of the stream is part of a "Salmon Enhancement Program," driven by the pressures of game fishermen to have more fish to catch. That's what drives most everything the Bureau of Fisheries and Wildlife does, as I realized earlier that day at the Oakridge Hatchery, watching the spring chinook "spawn." Five men in rubber overalls stood in water up to their waists in a fenced-in holding pond, the water alive with chinook, seething. Two other men and a young woman with a clipboard waited on the dock, the end of the assembly line. Stage one: feel the bellies to see if the hens are green or ripe. Stage two: toss the green hens over the fence into a small canal (heads bobbing off into the distance, like a herd of fording cattle). Stage three: whack the ripe hens in the head with a wooden club (sometimes two or three times for good measure) then buck them up onto the dock and into a slot on a row of plastic trays where the tails are clipped with garden shears and the blood is drained away. Stage four: whip the drained hens around from the trays and, almost in the same movement, slit them open from tail to gullet to release cascades of bright orange eggs, hundreds in each fish, pouring out into five-gallon buckets. Stage five: throw the dead chinook onto a growing pile of carcasses in large, plastic-lined wooden boxes. Ripe bucks go through the same cycle, except that in the last stage their sperm is milked into the buckets, squirting out when their flanks are squeezed.

This happens over and over, hundreds of times a day, thousands of times a week during the fall season—the thrashing of the fish, the slippery-suited men, the shouting and laughing, the growing rhythm of tossing, whacking, bleeding; the glassy eyes of the fish, the thump of bodies in the carcass box. The

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eggs and sperm in the five-gallon buckets are later placed in oxygen-enriched trays where the fry emerge. These eventually become the fish in the holding ponds, then the larger fish, and so on, until they are released into whatever river or lake. The same assembly-line system produces the fish—trout and salmon—for every major water system in Oregon. It has for two human generations, ever since the building of the major dams. That's the point. The dams disrupt the spawning cycle so that it must be artificially recreated, season after season. Without that system there would be no fish in the rivers above the dams, no fishermen buying fancy reels, potato chips, Budweiser, and four-wheel drives, voting for their favorite congressmen.

I wasn't disgusted by the spawning so much as surprised. I hadn't given fish much thought. My images of salmon in rivers were images of the natural and spontaneous, the nonhuman. But here, too, more is happening than meets the eye. Beneath the surface is complexity, irony, and contradiction: teams of specialists, special interest groups, government bureaucracies, the profit-motive, contested history.

As I reflect on that day, what I keep thinking about is how different the two operations felt, how different their effects were on me. Both the designing of the stream and the spawning of the chinook are unnatural, human activities, involving plans and at some points heavy equipment. But I can't help thinking of the designing of the stream as a better thing to try to do.

The dams are huge, with far-reaching effects, but the sill logs on Portland Creek, with the boulders and the anchoring cables, are small, their effects local. Each log is itself a small dam, the water shooting off it into tiny pools, pouring over silt in shallows. But the logs and their cables will disappear in a few years, hidden by gravel and cobble and the flow of deepening water. Unlike the huge dams, the stream project is not a grand simplification of a single system, its logic easy to understand. The replication of the stream is exceedingly complex, each piece in the system delicately balanced against the others.

The spawning of the salmon is a simplification too, serving the ends of efficiency. It's a mass-production process, generating huge inventory. Whatever else you might say about the designing of the stream, however, it works against the cause of efficiency. And that's why I want to praise it. Reinventing glides and riffles, building in overhangs and hollows and backups at fifty-yard intervals are not the most cost-effective way to generate units of fish (the hatchery is). The designing of the stream is admirable because it's trying to put things right, to put things back the way they were before the dams and the fishermen and the four-wheel drives. It seems to me there's a kind of necessary humility in that, a necessary reverence. The designing of the stream is not an effort to impose a convenient structure on the natural world but an effort to understand the complexity and chaos and randomness of what was already there, before us. And, of course, that effort must ultimately fail. We can never get it entirely right. Nature will exceed us.

And yet I came away from Portland Creek calmed, heartened. Trying to design a stream involves the contemplation of water, the observation of its endless flow, of the bending of the alder and willow, of the sky overhead. It involves looking at the rocks, seeing the leaves fall, trying to understand how the water moves.

I'm all for it. I think the government should try designing as many streams as possible, improving the technology as best it can. It couldn't make things worse—could even divert us from more damaging pursuits. It would give jobs to the unemployed millworkers. And even if the projects failed for fish or the arrogant came away unchanged, there would still be some P-5 pools with the alder leaves shining like pennies. There would still be the riffles and glides, and the sound of water, the endless rushing and flowing and eddying of water, beneath trees.

CHRIS ANDERSON

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OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

THEY JUST DON'T GET IT

FROM ONE PROSPECTIVE FIRST LADY TO ANOTHER

According to the new book titled *Dirty Politics* (Oxford University Press) by Kathleen Jamieson, dean of the Annenberg School for Communications, slandering, smearing, lying, and distortion have been part of campaigns almost from the beginning, but in recent campaigns their effect has been magnified by the way in which they are treated by the post-Watergate news media. Journalists have virtually abandoned their obligation to inform about issues and candidates' stands to concentrate instead on chasing rumors and analyzing polls, as if choosing our leaders were a horse race or an athletic competition instead of the most important of our civic responsibilities.

Jamieson begins her book with the example of the Willie Horton advertisement used in the 1988 Bush campaign and the resultant news stories because it has become a synonym for the dirty politics of her title. Consequently, candidate Bill Clinton's observation following the Republican convention in Houston that Republicans were trying to make Hillary Clinton the Willie Horton of this campaign was a serious charge, one that no one who watched the Republican convention could take lightly. First ladies and the wives of elected presidents have been criticized,

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even vilified, in the past but this is the first time in my memory that the full force of opposition criticism has been formally, apparently with the approval of the official party leaders, levied against a candidate's wife.

Never mind that there has been a backlash and the heads of the Republican ticket have been waffling and back-pedaling. (The polls have shown that women everywhere resented the tactic as an attack on working women. And in the Washington suburbs a group of stay-at-home mothers retaliated by organizing a Hillary Clinton fan club, evidence that the resentment was not confined to working women alone.) Marilyn Quayle has written that her rather blatant, if indirect, attack was misconstrued. The vice-president is quoted as saying that he is sure that "Hillary is as much help to Bill Clinton as Marilyn has been to me." But ex-candidate Pat Buchanan is sticking to his poisonous guns and so is evangelist Pat Robertson. For good or worse, Hillary Clinton has been made an issue—the Willie Horton issue of 1992.

Does it matter? Yes, if a recent *Time* magazine cover story [September 14] is right. According to poll results, the public perception and approval of the candidate's wife can make the difference in the crucial few percentage points needed to win in a tight race. This, then, becomes a tricky proposition because the perception has to be formed by what the public comes to know of her. Whereas the coverage of a first lady is fairly consistent, the coverage of a candidate's wife is very spotty and always has been. Right now, even I, despite being an "inside-the-Beltway" person with some friends rather high in the campaign structure, have only a hazy idea of the substance of Hillary Clinton's speeches and the nature of her campaign activity.

There is no consistent coverage on which I can rely. Attention centers on a candidate's wife and children in a spasmodic way—and usually when things go awry. Admittedly things have changed a great deal since I myself was involved as a wife in a presidential campaign almost twenty-five years ago. The efforts of wife and children then were even more underreported than now and often were considered so inconsequential that reporting them accurately seemed unimportant.

Now, so many years later, reporting on the wives is still very selective. Would we, for example, know as much as we do about Hillary Clinton if it had not been for the media concentration on the sleazy Gennifer Flowers story or on the unbridled Republican attack? True, there seems to have been a growing interest in wives over the years. In 1972 Eleanor McGovern shared a *Time* cover with Pat Nixon and later Rosalynn Carter had a *Newsweek* cover to herself. Columnist Richard Cohen has attributed this increase to the reporters' need for celebrity chatter to fill up space.

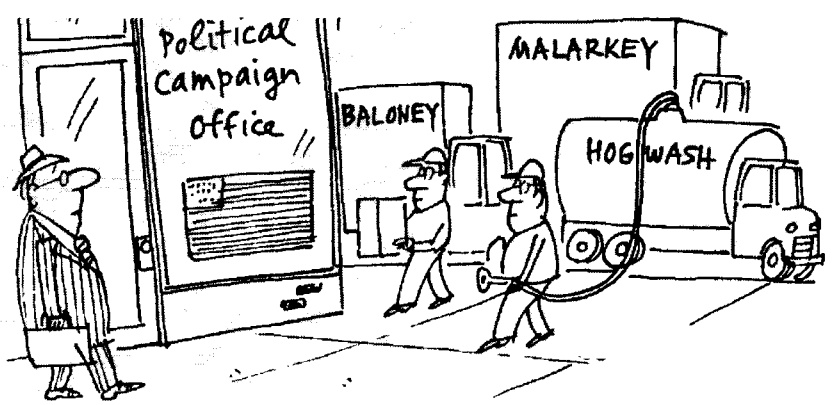
The history of the *Time* piece on Hillary Clinton would seem to bear him out. The interview accompanying the cover was to have been done by historian Garry Wills. At almost the last minute Wills objected to the editing of his piece and withdrew it, leaving *Time* writer Margaret Carlson scurrying to fill the hole. What caused the difficulty over Wills's story? If one can guess on the basis of an earlier Wills story-review in the *New York Review of Books* (March 5, 1992), it must have taken Hillary too seriously. Carlson is quoted as saying that "there was a great deal of historical first lady stuff in his piece which, while very interesting, wasn't what was needed."

Carlson's own piece is succinct, surface-skimming, lively, and predictable. It sketches a Hillary who has to head back to Little Rock and daughter Chelsea at intervals "to feel grounded," a woman private about the faith she nourishes by carrying favorite Scriptures with her, a woman who tends to the earnest and serious yet has a playful side, but concludes eventually that Hillary is "a strong and determined woman used to dominating whatever situation she is in by force of mind."

The Wills *New York Review* article did much more. He showed readers a Hillary Clinton who is "one of the most important scholar-activists of the last two decades, a Hillary who has an impressive record of altering life for the better for parents and children in Arkansas." He documents his characterization with excerpts from her writing and speeches through 1988.

These show real development in her thought since the 1974 article "Children under the Law" to which exception was taken in these pages (*Commonweal*, May 8 and June 19). Not that Hillary has abandoned her theory that children's legal rights should equal their competency and ability to take responsibility but she has adopted a more comprehensive approach to social problems, largely as a result of her study of the treatment of children in many countries in her capacity as co-chair of The Children's Defense Fund—in particular the French approach since it is "a coordinated comprehensive system...that links day care, early education, and health care." She helped institute neonatal clinics to prepare mothers for parenthood and brought back from Israel a program to help impoverished mothers to teach basic skills (especially speech skills) to their children. As head of the committee to raise educational standards in Arkansas, she rallied community support for changes that helped parents achieve an educational system that no longer limited their children's futures.

Whether we agree with her approach or not we cannot deny that both Arkansas parents and children have reason to be grateful to her and for her.



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BREAD, BUTTER & INFRASTRUCTURE

ECONOMIC ISSUES IN THE CAMPAIGN

CHARLES K. WILBER

The 1992 presidential campaign may never provide us with a genuine debate about the state of the American economy. What we have seen so far in the campaign is sometimes a slugging match, sometimes a battle of sound bites; rarely does it resemble a true argument. Whichever side is more responsible for the poor quality of the dialogue, the result is that voters will have to decode the rhetoric of the campaigns for themselves, and decide which, if either, offers hope. This two-part article is offered as a resource in that effort. (The first part appeared in *Commonweal*, June 19, 1992.)

The place to begin is with the nature of capitalist economies. It is undisputed that they have been successful in producing unprecedented amounts of goods and services. It is equally clear that capitalist growth has proceeded unevenly between countries and within regions, creating great disparities of wealth and income, and that it has always proceeded cyclically, through euphoric booms and painful busts in every country and region.

Capitalism, wrote the great twentieth-century economist Joseph Schumpeter, is characterized by "creative destruction." Market-driven capitalism creates new technologies, new methods of organizing production, new jobs, new consumer goods. But a cost is exacted, imposed unequally on different countries, groups, regions, and families. New systems, technologies, products result in the destruction or displacement of existing ones. For one current example, closing or relocation of plants destroys jobs here and now, hurting specific families and communities.

Can governmental policies hold the destructive side of capitalism in check while encouraging its creative side? If so, how? That is where disagreement enters. Without attempting to do full justice to all viewpoints, I will offer some answers that make sense to me as an economist. For the most part, I will focus on policies that are necessary for *long-run* improvement of the economy, and will then assess the economic policies recommended by President George Bush and Governor Bill Clinton within that framework. As will be evident in my comments, the Clinton approach—while still unclear and certainly incomplete—appears both more comprehensive and better adapted to the economic realities than the president's.

Short-term policies. For the immediate and near-term future, available measures to overcome the present recession include action by the Federal Reserve to stimulate investment by maintaining low interest rates, and new kinds of government spending—for example, block grants to the states for infrastructure investment—to increase short-run demand. Such investment would also aid productivity growth for the long run. In contrast, the use of tax cuts as a quick fix for low demand is the opposite of what will be needed over the longer term—and temporary tax cuts have a way of becoming permanent.

Appraisal. Both candidates appear to favor low interest rates. Clinton speaks often of new government investment for improving the infrastructure and related needs, whereas Bush continues to rely for stimulus on reducing capital gains taxes and now speaks of an across-the-board reduction of taxes conditioned on decreases in federal spending.

Long-range Conditions

There are two problems of long-range significance for the U.S. economy. First is the increased competitiveness of other countries in the international economy, which has eroded the dominant position of the United States. Second are the government policies pursued during the 1980s in the name of free enterprise—tax cuts, heavy military spending, and lowered public investment. The results of our loss of international hegemony combined with the inappropriate policy responses of the 1980s have been a decline in U.S. manufacturing with a consequent loss of many high-wage jobs and the appearance of a two-tiered wage system; increases in income inequality, poverty, and homelessness; a huge rise in the federal deficit; and a shift from trade surpluses to trade deficits.

The global economy. The causes of the decline in U.S. com-

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petitiveness are less easily captured. First, it's necessary to understand how the world economy differs from that of any individual nation. In every domestic economy a central government having sovereign power establishes the framework and rules for carrying on economic exchange. In the United States, the federal government has the power under the Constitution to regulate interstate commerce. No state can impose import tariffs on goods produced in other states. The central government sets minimum wages, environmental regulations, safety requirements, and other economic parameters that are binding on all states, thereby creating what is now a continent-wide market, within which the creative side of capitalism is able to display its powers, and its destructive tendencies can be reined in, given the political will to do so.

There is no central government in the world economy to set the rules, though for much of the modern era there have been partial substitutes. Prior to World War I Great Britain more or less dominated and regulated world trade, but during the interwar years Britain was too weak and the result was chaos in the international economy and depression in the industrial countries. After World War II, world leaders at the Bretton Woods conference created institutions capable of regulating world trade to some extent. Exchange rates were fixed, resources were made available to countries in need of investment, temporary adjustment loans were made to nations experiencing international payments difficulties. The system worked, though hardly perfectly, because of U.S. dominance of the world economy. Few would claim that world trade became equitable, but for almost thirty years the system fostered stability. The recovery of Europe and the acceleration of economic growth in parts of the third world were two outcomes of our leadership.

President Richard Nixon's 1971 decision to let the dollar float reflected both the loss of U.S. economic dominance and the weakening of the Bretton Woods system. Today a new situation prevails. Japan, Germany, and others rebuilt their economies after the war with the latest technologies, giving them a more up-to-date industrial structure than the U.S. The process was speeded up as countries like South Korea and Taiwan began to industrialize, combining state-of-the-art technology with exceptionally low wage levels, creating ever stronger competition in the world marketplace.

Moreover, despite lip service paid to the principles of free trade, the economies that rebuilt after World War II did so with substantial protection against foreign competition. They all protected their farmers and used various means, tariff and non-tariff, to protect selected industrial products. For example, through the 1960s Japan imposed formal tariff and non-tariff barriers against foreign competition while building a highly centralized economy based on networks of banks and firms. When Japan reduced formal trade barriers, largely in response to pressure from abroad, these firms continued to buy from one another even when foreign products were cheaper. The Japanese assumption was that increased market share and long-term profits, aided by the survival of the networks, were more important than the supposed benefits of global free trade. Tariff reductions, then, have different effects in Japan than in the U.S., and the result has been tremendous Japanese trade surpluses.

With the waning of U.S. power and the decay of the Bretton Woods system, coordination in the international economy has been largely absent. Economic "summits" have tried to reestablish coordination, but it is difficult to reconcile the differing national economic interests involved. For one example, the German use of high interest rates to fight inflation has had the effect of reducing imports from the United States and other countries, thereby contributing to their sluggish economic growth.

Efforts to organize the world economy on pure free-market principles—mainly by preachment—have not been successful. World economic growth has slowed; in many areas of Africa and Latin America growth actually became negative during the 1980s. Trade imbalances have become extreme. Instability of exchange rates has become endemic in many areas. And the foreign debt borne by many countries, now including the United States, can only have a severe constricting effect for years.

What is to be done? New international agreements are needed if restructuring of the international economy is to be successful and achieved with minimum conflict. The world needs more stability, and it can be achieved only by conscious and coordinated planning and action. The place to begin is to deal with the debts of third-world countries in a way that will allow them to resume growth (which will increase demand for our exports). This may require some form of debt forgiveness. The Europeans and especially the Japanese are leading in this area.

Next we must attempt to move back to more stable exchange rates by reaching international agreements on ranges of rates and mechanisms to support them. This will work only if we begin to deal with international capital flows, making them less fluid by regulating them and beginning to tax them. From the perspective of the common good, the point of enabling flows of capital is to make capital available where it can contribute most to production; in the absence of regulation, capital moves for speculative and financial reasons that often have little to do with productivity, not to speak of equity or equality.

The same consideration applies to individual national policies regarding exchange rates, trade, and debt issues: all will be more effective if set within supranational programs that encourage and coordinate them. Just as it has been necessary for all countries to exert control over the workings of their domestic economies for the common good, it is time to extend similar measures to the international economy. The very factor that makes governments reluctant to cooperate—significant levels of unemployment at the domestic level—can be confronted only by a coordination of macroeconomic policies. We cannot continue to practice one kind of economics up to our frontiers and another kind beyond them. The solution will be endlessly complex but a start must be made. As a very long-run goal, the U.S. should lead the other concerned nations in setting up, through the United Nations and regional bodies, an institutional equivalent of a world public sector with authority to bring about international coordination of national economic policies.

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Appraisal. To an extent the Bush administration has dealt with the problem of third-world debt, through the Brady plan, but much more needs to be done. The president has also entered into agreements to support the dollar. In general, however, Bush relies on the workings of the free market to provide international coordination. Clinton's economic plan (discussed below under "Interim Steps") shows some recognition of how lack of regulation and coordination in the international economy affects the U.S. But much remains unclear. Bush proposed and Clinton has tentatively endorsed the recently negotiated North American Free Trade Accord, but it remains to be seen whether the accord is simply an extension of mostly unregulated free trade throughout the continent or the kind of needed coordination discussed above. If it turns out to be basically a free trade agreement, it may bring somewhat lower consumer prices while putting jobs, social benefits, and the environment (ours and the world's) at risk.

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Interim Steps

The new international agreements discussed above may appear—at least to candidates—too visionary even to be broached in a campaign dominated by catch phrases and personal attacks. But there are ways in which the U.S. can act more or less unilaterally, without compromising the long-term goal of international economic coordination and without embracing knee-jerk protectionism, by pursuing policies for a world in which most countries utilize a combination of partial openness where it benefits them, and subsidies, export promotion, and import restrictions in other areas. Among those worth discussing:

Imposition of a "VAT-corrective" tariff. Value-Added Taxes (VATS) are excise tolls imposed on the increase in a product's value created at each stage of its production and distribution. Most industrial and newly industrializing countries derive some of their revenue from VATS in the 12 to 15 percent range, but waive them on exports, in effect subsidizing exports. The U.S. could impose a VAT-corrective tariff equal to the exporting country's domestic VAT. Other penalties and surcharges should be held in readiness to discourage—preferably through negotiation—cases of subsidies, dumping, discounting, and other flagrant abuses of import and export controls.

Protection of our standards. Other countries have different policies toward certain issues that affect international price levels: e.g., child labor, a minimum wage, environmental standards, antitrust regulation, social security, and unemployment benefits. A country without such policies has lower production costs and can charge lower prices than the United States. A simple free trade policy places enormous pressure on the United States to undermine these social regulations, as is demonstrated by the efforts of the President's Competitiveness Council to soften environmental regulations. Instead of letting the lowest standards rule, offsetting tariffs are needed.

A strategic trade policy. Japan, Korea, and many European countries that do not have our simple faith in free trade follow policies that try to create comparative advantages in key industries such as the Airbus in Europe or supercomputers, optical fibers, and biotechnology in Japan. If we want vibrant steel, electronics, or biotechnology industries rather than whatever the marketplace gives us, a strategic trade policy needs to be developed. This is where government helps create the conditions for "winners"—that is, industries of the future that will make us more competitive with other countries—to be born and to thrive. It creates the conditions by investing in education, subsidizing basic research, and helping to finance promising new technologies. If done well such a policy could keep us from falling hopelessly behind other countries, and it could put pressure on them to open up their economies.

It's true that an industrial policy poses a danger of hiding inefficiencies by restricting competition, but that risk should be balanced against the high costs of relying only on free trade (failed businesses, lost jobs, destroyed communities, abandoned schools, neglected infrastructure). Another danger is that of tit-for-tat responses from other countries that could reduce the welfare of all, a risk that can be lessened through negotiation, since every country has industries it wants to maintain or develop.

Trade readjustment assistance. Finally, despite the above policies, there will still be many industries that are hurt by international competition. To soften the human suffering in those cases of massive dislocation, trade readjustment aid needs to be increased. Retraining programs for displaced workers, relocation allowances, and subsidies to impacted communities to attract new businesses are needed to help reduce human suffering and increase economic efficiency by providing access to new skills and encouraging mobility of resources.

The key issue here is that worker retraining and relocation, community investment, and other policies are necessary if we want to *manage the transition* to the new world economic order that is in the making. Similar transitions in the past were, by default, paid for by the people and communities left behind by the creative-destructive changes brought about by capitalist development.

Appraisal. Bush has rejected proposals for a strategic trade policy and calls instead for reliance on the workings of the free market, coupled with arm-twisting of our trading partners in specific cases. Shortly after the Republican convention, in an interesting departure from avowed policy, the National Institutes of Health issued a draft of a broad strategic plan to set priorities for the government's vast biomedical research support. For the first time these government research funds are to be evaluated not only by their impact on the nation's health, but also by their "contributions to the enhancement of the nation's economic growth, productivity, and competitiveness." One goal

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appears to be the encouragement of the biotechnology industry, which had sales of $4 billion in 1991 and projected sales of $50 billion by the turn of the century. This is exactly the type of program that would be part of a strategic trade policy.

Programs offered by Clinton do add up to a strategic trade policy. He proposes creating a "civilian research and development agency to bring together businesses and universities to develop cutting-edge products and technologies"; the agency would focus on "crucial new industries such as biotechnology, robotics, high-speed computing, and environmental technology." He also proposes creating an "Economic Security Council" (paralleling the National Security Council) "with responsibility for coordinating America's international economic policy." His administration, he has said, would urge our trading partners to abandon unfair trade practices; "if other countries refuse to play by our trade rules," he has said, "we'll play by theirs." Clinton's economic plan also contains a program for retraining workers that is to be financed by a small increase in payroll taxes. After the Republican convention, in response to Clinton's plan, Bush proposed a $2 billion-a-year retraining program to be financed from unspecified expenditure cuts.

Domestic Policy

In a competitive world, international and domestic economic policies are inextricably linked. Restoring economic growth in the U.S. will require us to increase national savings by reducing the chronic federal budget deficit, to increase productivity through public investment in human capital and infrastructure, and to pursue a full-employment policy.

The deficit, growth, taxes. One approach to deficit reduction is to rely on economic growth to increase tax revenues. The stagnation of the past four years has held back growth in income and therefore in tax revenues. Unless there is a triple-dip recession, the normal expectation is that there should be three or four years of better economic growth beginning next year—enough, according to an estimate by the Congressional Budget Office, to reduce the deficit by one-third to $193 billion in 1996. To promote further growth, Bush relies on capital-gains tax cuts, Clinton on government investment.

But there is a chicken-egg problem: economic growth is needed to lower the deficit, but the deficit needs to be reduced to increase economic growth. Though control of expenditures can make a contribution (of this, more below), neither spending cuts nor "natural" growth nor both together can of themselves reduce the deficit enough to finance the needed investment. It follows that tax increases are also needed. In economic terms, the deficits resulting from the ill-advised tax cuts of the early '80s are dis-savings; they have lowered the total national savings available to finance long-term investment in the economy, the source of productivity gains and economic growth. As explained in the first installment of this article, our reliance on foreign savings for domestic investment has served to increase the trade deficit.

The two arguments against raising taxes are that we are already overburdened and that more taxes will reduce incentives to save, invest, and work. In fact, the evidence available supports neither contention. The U.S. has the lowest rate of taxes (federal, state, and local) out of income among the major industrial countries—30 percent compared to an average of 45 percent for Europe. Thus, the excessive burden argument against tax increases is unpersuasive.

What about the argument that high taxes have disincentive effects that slow economic growth? When economic growth over the period 1980-1987 for fourteen industrial countries is compared to tax rates there simply is no relationship. Some high tax countries grew rapidly, others slowly. So also for (relatively) low tax countries.

Why do Americans resist taxes more than others? The major reason for our low tax rates is a matter of our political culture: Americans have always been more suspicious of government than most Europeans. President Ronald Reagan, who had his own visceral-ideological distrust of government, played on that suspicion to convince the public that taxes were too high and government spending wasteful. As Walter Mondale, Paul Tsongas, and Ross Perot learned, a politican running for office who advocates more taxes takes an enormous risk.

Appraisal. Bush not only opposes any tax increases but, as we have seen, strongly urges a reduction of capital-gains taxes. A study of the capital-gains tax proposal by the Joint Committee on Taxation concluded that nearly 70 percent of the tax reduction would go to those with incomes over $100,000 a year. The Bush claim that these tax reductions would be saved and channeled into investment, leading to more growth and more jobs, and thus to increased tax revenue and a lower deficit, does not square with the experience of the past twelve years under the same policy. At the Republican convention, Bush added an across-the-board tax cut, of unspecified amount, to be paid for by unspecified expenditure reductions. It's hard to believe this is anything more than a political gambit to pacify the supply siders in his party.

Clinton has proposed some modest tax increases on the wealthy, expected to bring in $80 billion in tax receipts over the next four years, and a closing of tax loopholes for corporations for another $60 billion. His program also contains tax reductions: expansion of the earned income tax credit, a choice for the middle class between a children's tax credit and a "significant" reduction in income tax rates, a targeted investment tax credit, and a 50 percent tax exclusion for small businesses making long-term investments in new businesses. How much tax revenue would be lost through these reductions is not clear. What is clear is that neither the Bush nor the Clinton proposals would significantly reduce the deficit.

Alternatives. From the viewpoint of an economist concerned for the common good, there are other ways to go that ought to be part of the political dialogue. One of them is adoption of a VAT system for the U.S. It has been calculated that such a tax could eliminate the deficit and cover the costs of rebuilding infrastructure, upgrading education, and extending medical coverage to all. Exempting basics (food, housing, medical

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care) would reduce the regressivity inherent in any excise tax. Income taxes could be reduced as an incentive to accept a new VAT. It would be easy to share the VAT revenues with states and local governments to carry out needed programs. An added advantage is that the tax would fall on consumption rather than income, thereby providing an incentive for savings.

Increased taxation of gasoline could raise additional tax revenues and encourage conservation in its use. Our gasoline prices are the lowest among industrial countries and, in real terms, not much higher than they were before the 1973 oil crisis. Higher "sin" taxes also make sense. Real tax rates (adjusted for inflation) have fallen to half the 1950 rates on cigarettes and to 25 percent on alcohol. For a final example, a good case can be made for a securities transfer excise tax; it could raise some $10 billion a year in revenue and it would discourage dubious short-term, speculative practices while fostering a more stable supply of long-run capital funds.

Cost-cutting. Both Bush and Clinton have proposals to control spending on certain government entitlement programs. At least on paper, the Bush plan would hold down costs much more than Clinton's. The president would set overall ceilings on entitlement expenditures and impose specific reforms such as requiring wealthier recipients to pay higher monthly Medicare premiums, for an overall saving of $68 billion over the next six years. In Clinton's projected budget, entitlement reform is relied upon to save $4.4 billion over four years. (This does not include any savings from an overhaul of the health-care system, which is still in the making.) On military spending, the Clinton plan for defense funding calls for $38 billion more in cuts over the next four years than the Bush program.

When we look at the federal budget there are three expenditure items, about $250-300 billion each, that dwarf all the others—Social Security, interest payments on the national debt, and military expenditures. Interest payments are legal obligations, Social Security appears politically untouchable at this time, and there are real limits to military reductions. Thus, the belief that expenditure reductions alone can substantially lower the deficit is false.

Investment for growth. Reducing the deficit will increase national savings to finance more private investment. But we must also invest in human beings and infrastructure, both neglected for twenty years, to make that private investment more productive.

If improving the quality of the workforce is obviously vital, how to do it is less clear. For example, take the issue of improving education. Research studies have been unable to find any relationship between resource inputs and indicators of success such as achievement test scores. Simply spending more on schooling is not promising; we need to know more about what works and what doesn't. Evidence suggests that money for inner-city schools that lack textbooks and lab facilities is effective; so also for Head Start programs and vocational training. It may well be that more basic change is needed, but we do not know what type of structural change will help. President Bush's voucher plan might work, or it might make schools even more unequal; there is little hard evidence either way.

H. Ross Perot

"First you say you do and then you don't. You're undecided now, so what are you going to do?"

Perot's possible reentry into the presidential race at this late date is perplexing. He cannot hope to win. He can only be a spoiler. But maybe what he says is his reason for doing so really is the reason—neither Bush nor Clinton is directly addressing the issue of the federal deficit.

Perot's economic policies have similarities to and differences from both Bush and Clinton's. The major difference is a clear call for reduction in the federal deficit as his number-one priority. And he is willing to tackle our major political taboos—calling for increases in taxes and for controlling Social Security entitlements. In particular, his proposals to increase gasoline taxes, cut agricultural subsidies to large farmers, cap home mortgage interest deductions, and reduce cost-of-living adjustments on Social Security benefits and federal pensions deserve serious consideration.

Perot's economic policies are more interventionist than Bush's and maybe even more so than Clinton's. For example, he endorses a major increase in public investment in infrastructure and education, favors an industrial strategy, and is opposed to the North American Free Trade Accord.

C.K.W.

So also with infrastructure: empirical studies disagree over how much such investment will increase productivity. Some argue instead for more efficient usage. If heavy trucks were charged in proportion to the damage they cause highways, for example, more freight would be shifted to railroads, reducing both the irksomeness and the economic costs of traffic congestion. Still, it is clear that many of our roads, bridges, and inner cities are decaying, and that investment in infrastructure creates jobs and induces technical change. The key issue is choosing those projects that have the highest pay-off, rather than those pushed by the strongest lobbies; a choice that will take presidential and congressional leadership.

Appraisal. If one assumes effective action against the deficit, Clinton's proposal to increase public investment in infrastructure and human capital by $200 billion over the next four years is a more direct and equitable way to improve productivity than Bush's emphasis on capital-gains tax cuts, an educational voucher system, and further deregulation of business. Apart from roads and bridges, investment in railroads, information networks, environmental technology, defense conversion, worker retraining, Head Start, apprenticeship training, and a national health-care plan should, despite the problems noted above, enhance the productivity of private capital.

Full employment. A key structural problem of a free market economy is its inability to cope with unemployment. The

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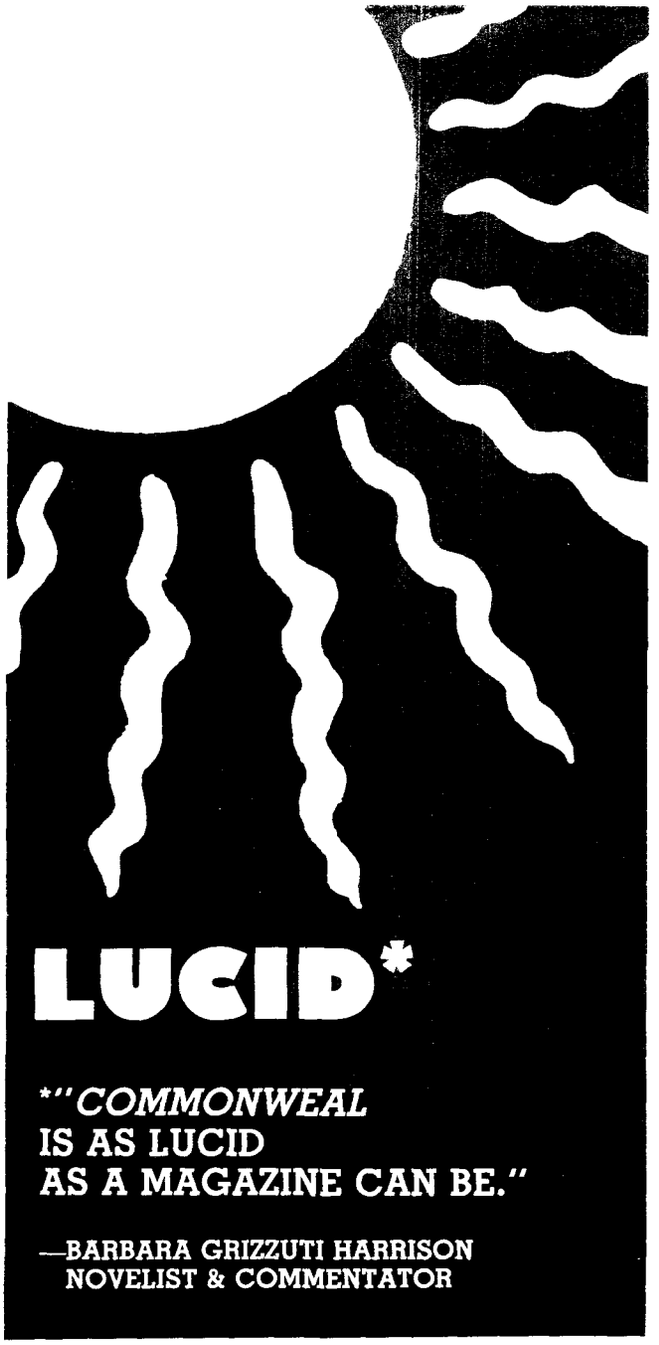

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reason it exists is that in our economy a majority own no land, production-scale tools, or capital, and have only their labor to sell. The minority who own these assets hire or retain employees only when it appears sufficiently profitable, so that employment is a byproduct of profit-making and therefore subject to the vagaries of the business cycle. Thus a minimally regulated market economy will seldom if ever generate full employment. Among measures that would move us toward the goal of full employment:

- A public employment program, possibly linked to infrastructure repairs and improvements as well as other areas of needed public service.
- More consultation among the main economic actors—industry, agriculture, labor, and all levels of government—to implement the goals of the under-utilized Employment Act of 1946, working through committees with the Council of Economic Advisers. Policies that might emerge from these consultations include targeted job programs, education and training to equip workers with needed skills, day care centers for employed parents, and so on.

Appraisal. *On form—that is, judging by the record and his* public statements—governmental intervention on this scale and for these purposes is anathema to Bush. Clinton's economic plan includes a national apprenticeship program, a youth opportunity corps, worker retraining programs, and a plan to move people from welfare to work through education, training, and child care. These programs aim at reducing unemployment but do not include any central coordinating body to insure that they add up to a full employment guarantee.

Summary

The economic problems that confront the American people are real and extremely serious. In the near term, it is proper for the U.S. to insist on fair terms of trade while holding to the ideal of a free trade world regulated by new international agreements.

Domestically, we need policies deliberately aimed at overcoming stagnation and promoting equitable and sustainable growth, while protecting the environment. It must be emphasized that we cannot achieve any of these goals nor can we contribute to global economic stability as long as we suffer from the fiscal constraints imposed by the trade and federal budget deficits.

Many Americans are already convinced, and correctly so, that there are no painless solutions. But practically all workable programs will meet opposition from powerful special interests; moreover, they must be enacted and carried out in the context of deep philosophic differences among the American people: free markets *vs.* government intervention, individual freedom and responsibility *vs.* community obligations, and so on. These differences, along with serious conflicts of interests, will also hinder efforts to restore and enhance international economic relationships.

The times, in short, demand real political leadership. We must expect and require it of our representatives. □

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WHAT'S MISSING FROM THIS PICTURE?

NORMAN LEAR EXPLAINS

THOMAS M. LANDY

Most Americans know Norman Lear as the man who gave us Archie and Edith Bunker, Fred Sanford, Maude, and Mary Hartman. He once commented that he liked to imagine that he had made almost every man, woman, and child in the United States laugh at least once.

Some know him for his forays into politics, the most significant being his founding of People for the American Way, which took strong stands against the televangelists and the fundamentalist "religious right." But Lear has other facets.

In his keynote address to the convention of the National Education Association two years ago, he startled the audience by shifting the focus from civil liberties—the anticipated topic—to our society's need to restore a sense of spirituality and moral responsibility. Society, he said, had to reclaim its spiritual center from the religious right and the new-age swamis. Why, he asked the NEA, "in our schools, our communities, our homes...have we been so afraid to teach and discuss the values that hold us together, that make us moral and spiritual beings? At no time in my life can I remember our culture being so estranged from this essential part of itself."

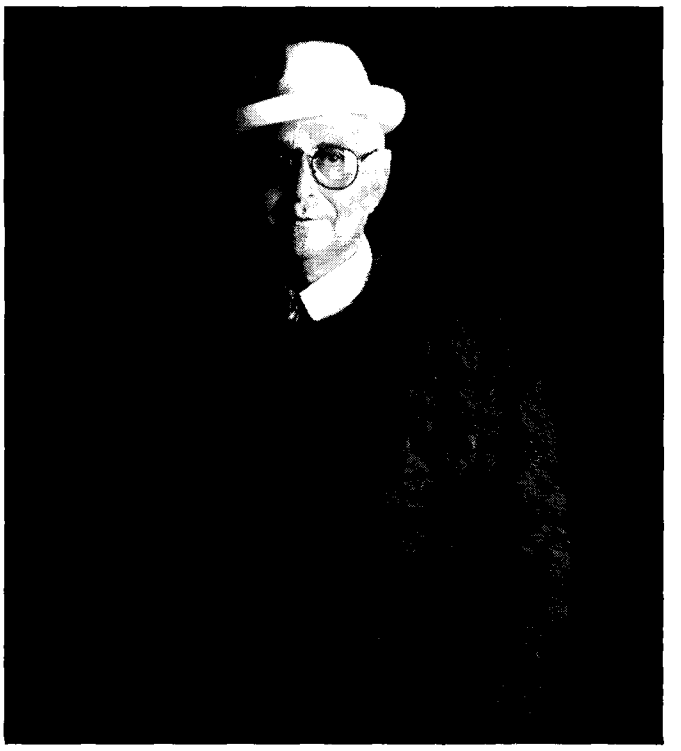
Last spring, Lear addressed a joint faculty meeting of the Harvard Divinity School and Harvard Business School, where he argued that Americans today are lonely for people and institutions which believe they matter and will reach out to them. Business, he said, has become the fountainhead of values, replacing church, family, education, and civil authority. "The truth," he said despairingly, "is that which sells." We can ease our loneliness, he said, if we renew our sense of social responsibility and "learn to nourish and respect the spirit."

Lear is a warm, emotional man. His Los Angeles office is surprisingly simple, its shelves lined with manuscripts and books like *The Cosmic Christ,* the *Tao Te Ching*, and *The Book of Job*. He is a bundle of seeming contradictions. The same man who likes to make people laugh also says, "I find outrage very helpful." He rarely watches TV, except to fall asleep at night. And if the focus on religion and family seems strange coming from a media mogul and staunch civil libertarian, the reason does not seem apparent to Norman Lear. T.M.L.

THOMAS M. LANDY, S.J., *teaches at Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut.*

THOMAS M. LANDY: What is the difference between the Norman Lear most Americans have known in the past—sitcom king and civil liberties champion—and the Norman Lear who spoke to the NEA and at Harvard Divinity School? Have you changed significantly?

NORMAN LEAR: I don't experience it as a shift. I do know myself better. There's nothing I've learned about myself that I can't look back and see in my work. Edith Bunker was written in 1968, and what I tried to do was make her as quintessentially Christlike in her responses as I could. And we continued to do that for nine years. That's the question—how would Jesus have reacted? Or take *Cold Turkey*, a picture that starred Dick Van Dyke as a reverend. I had a lot to say about the way he practiced religion. Or the response of my character in "Sunday Dinner," the television show—the awe and wonder she expressed at the explosion of taste in her head from biting into a great peach. That awe is something I have felt and talked about all of my life.



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What happened to me in 1985 is that I met my wife Lyn. For the first time in my life I was in a relationship that nurtured, encouraged, allowed this side of me to bloom.

LANDY: Can we talk about your own experience of spirituality?

LEAR: The only things that I can hold onto in religious and/or spiritual terms, are those things that appeal to me commonsensically. It may not have to be proved—that's where my faith comes in—but if commonsensically I can get it, then I can hold onto it.

There's an ancient piece of Hasidic wisdom which I adore. It's not unlike some things in the Tao or in Buddhism. It goes: A person should have a garment with two pockets. In the first pocket there should be a piece of paper on which is written, "I am but dust and ashes." In the second pocket there should be a piece of paper on which it is written, "For me the world is created." Now, that's exactly the way I feel.

Having heard this, I cannot open my eyes, I cannot look at you, and everything in this room, and not feel that it was all created for me. In the other pocket, I appreciate more with every passing day how insignificant I am, how tiny my place on this planet is, given the grandeur of the enterprise—this universe as only one of a billion universes. How can I take *me* so seriously? In a crazy way, the more I understand that, the bigger I feel, the more important my day is, the more important the moment I own. What's it here for, if it wasn't created for each of us? Of course it is. That's what I mean by commonsensical. It makes such ultimate sense to me.

LANDY: Mary Hartman never talked about those values, by a long shot. Haven't you helped form the culture you lament?

LEAR: I believe that art can inform and comment on the culture. It rarely leads it. I just saw *Batman Returns.* Its cynicism appalled me, but I've not read a single review about the film that spoke of its antihuman essence. Because we live in a cynical and mean-spirited time, neither the film nor the critics and social commentators understand the culture, let alone lead it.

LANDY: You tend to talk about common ground—apparent similarities among religious beliefs. It's easy to do that, but what about the institutional terms by which most Americans understand their faith? What happens when we might want to share the common experience, but not lose the particularity of our religious beliefs?

LEAR: That's where all the trouble arises, the conflicts in what humankind makes of the Original Gift, that capacity to experience, to wonder.

Suppose you and I love films, and we join a film club. Every time I see you on Tuesday nights when the film club gets together, we shake hands, share a drink, and we're grateful for the common interest that brings us together. I can't wait to see you. Then we run *Basic Instinct*, a Scorsese movie, whatever. You see it very differently from me, and we get into an agitated discussion. It's the same way with religion. I often think that interfaith meetings are never really going to come up with solutions until it's widely accepted that we have to love one another before we find our individual dogmas. I have to love you and recognize what's inside that I can't see, that capacity which I share. It's wonderful. I look at 700 people in an audience, and I know that they all found something different than I did, because they are all different.

LANDY: What happens when people take their particular religious beliefs as the grounding for arguments about policy-funding for the NEA, or pornography, or abortion? Is that a problem for you?

LEAR: Well, the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam movement, peace movements—every great movement in modern American history has had a great religious component. I think we're much richer for that contribution.

People for the American Way has just published a "Declaration of Conscience." We worked on this document for a long time. "The fate of this nation lies not just with a system of government and laws," it says. "Its destiny will flow from the spirit with which we treat each other. In recognition of this, we acknowledge the contribution of religious experience to the values we share: respect, compassion and love, transcending even those differences of ideology and politics that so engage our passions." We can still do this and protect free speech, tolerance, the separation of church and state.

LANDY: Why did you found People for the American Way?

LEAR: I didn't start out by trying to found an organization at all. I saw Falwell, Robertson, Swaggart, and all those fellows, and I thought they were abusing religion. Most people I knew laughed them off, but I got an idea to do a motion picture called *Religion*, and I started to watch all these shows eight, ten, hours a week. It was sobering. And I started to say, This is not my America. You don't mix politics and religion this way. They railed against the Supreme Court, the public school system, secular humanism—often with thinly veiled anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic intolerance. You don't wish Supreme Court justices dead with a Bible in your hand as Swaggart once did. They exploited their followers' needs for their own ends, and insisted that federal law ought to embody sectarian beliefs.

My goal was simply to get another message on the tube. So I went out at my own expense and made three or four thirty-second commercials. I had a working stiff like Archie Bunker. I always try to think what the average guy is thinking. In them, he says that a bunch of preachers came on TV trying to tell him what to think on political issues—that he and his family are good Christians or bad Christians depending on their political point of view. He knows there's got to be something wrong when somebody tells you you're a good Christian or a bad Christian depending on your political views.

I had a passing acquaintance with Father [Theodore] Hesburgh [of Notre Dame]. I showed him this video. He thought it was important, and he put me in contact with six other religious leaders, including Martin Marty. At one meeting, they were saying, This problem never goes away, it seems to be getting worse—you should institutionalize this. Since my commercials ended with the guy saying "that's not the American way," we chose People for the American Way.

LANDY: So, People for the American Way included a lot of religious figures in order to address church-state issues in a different way.

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LEAR: Oh, yes! When we started off, there was Ted Hesburgh, who later asked to step down because he was catching a lot of flack. Father [Robert] Drinan is still on the board, as are several other clergymen.

LANDY: You talk a lot about morality, the need to discuss religion, family values. There are a lot of people out there who would argue that civil libertarians are precisely the ones who have turned us away from discussing these things.

LEAR: I've made clear in my talks that I agree. But the religious right's divisiveness may be another reason why schools and other institutions are afraid to deal with this issue.

LANDY: What response did you get when you took your new focus to People for the American Way?

LEAR: It's taken some time, and I introduced the idea of doing the Declaration of Conscience a couple of years ago. We talked about it for a long time.

In the course of our work together, we read that some 40 million people call themselves born-again Christians. No way, we realized, were 40 million people following the televangelists. The reason these people were getting as far as they were hadn't as much to do with who they were or what they were saying, but with the emptiness of people's lives—the deep spiritual needs of the American people.

In good part because civil libertarian arguments may have discouraged discussion, and because the mainline churches were unsuccessful in reaching out to them, these televangelists were aggressively and successfully reaching for those people. We realized that we had to start reaching out as well.

LANDY: It sounds, in a way, as if People for the American Way was begun by a coalition of civil libertarians and mainstream religious leaders to protect First Amendment rights, but that in some ways it has shifted to trying to talk about religious foundations of civic culture and to encourage civil libertarians to do the same.

LEAR: Well, that's not the way I'd word it, but you're on the right track. We didn't come this distance without learning something, without growing. And one of the things I think all of us have learned is that people you initially perceive as your opponent are not necessarily that. Everyone in what appears to be the opposing army is following a leader. When you try to find out, Why *that* leader?, then you begin to discover that they have some of the same hopes and aspirations that you do. That's what happens. You begin not to write off a whole section of America just because they are following something or someone out of their own needs. It's better to reach out to their needs.

The religious right taught us a lesson, in spite of themselves. Even though they responded to people's deepest yearnings in ways more likely to divide than unite, their exploitation underscored a point: We are not a nation enjoying our material

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success. We must begin to make commitments to higher values, to live a moral code that connects us with each other and with eternity.

Ninety percent of Americans believe in a higher meaning—God. It seems so foolish for all the people who care to use religion properly—I mean privately, personally—to cede so much to the fringes—to the fundamentalists and the new-age people.

LANDY: Where do we find the resources in a pluralistic democracy to bring about the kind of discussion you are calling for?

LEAR: It would really help to have a leader, a president, who could respect and appreciate religion, and who understood he could talk about it without trampling on anybody else's religion. Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia was the first leader in a long time whose public statements indicated a spirit-led philosophy.

LANDY: Do you think our culture has the capacity to produce a politician like Vaclav Havel?

LEAR: Absolutely.

LANDY: In 1992, which do you think is more endangered—the religious foundations of civic culture, or our First Amendment rights?

LEAR: What lies behind the question, I assume, is these things are in conflict. I don't see them as in conflict at all. I don't think the First Amendment infringes anyone's rights or circumscribes them.

LANDY: Many people would argue that the recent Supreme Court ruling on prayer in school pointed to a conflict.

LEAR: I grew up with prayer in schools. It was a joke. We also pledged allegiance to the flag. But when you are six or seven, you cannot do anything by rote without finding funny ways to change it. It grows less meaningful each time. Unless you're living in an entirely different culture with somebody behind you banging a drum at you. But that's not America. So prayer in school was a joke. It trivializes religion to pretend that one person's prayer is the same as another's.

LANDY: I wonder if most Americans today really are in fortresses. So few people even vote, or seem to be informed enough to have political opinions they want to act on.

LEAR: I always blame us—the elites—for that. Not just the media. Mencken said, Nobody ever lost money underestimating the intelligence of the American people. It's the way the establishment thinks about "the great unwashed." I don't buy it, but it's the way over the years television has treated the American public. They bought the lowest-common-denominator nonsense. They even developed cynical tests to prove it. I think we're ill-informed because no one informs us. We can't be informed by thirty-second political spots, or by politicians who talk in sound bites and are afraid to speak their minds.

LANDY: Do you believe those critics who argue that America is on the skids morally, politically, spiritually? Has the fabric of American society been undermined?

LEAR: Yes, in every one of those departments. But I would call it a slump. Slump suggests something temporary. We just may be the most well-informed, yet least self-aware, people in history. That partly explains why we see ourselves so negatively.

LANDY: Your major themes sound like ones we'd expect from Dan Quayle or the religious right more than from Norman Lear. What's the difference?

LEAR: I don't think there are any villains. We live in a climate that grew around us—no one specifically devised it. We are 250 million people in an experiment that's only 200 years old. Give us a break. It's very complex. A climate of blame has been pushed in America. But nobody said, let's take the industrial revolution and progress and turn them into a means of destroying the planet. Nobody said, let's pollute the streams and the oceans and burn holes in the ozone. There's no conspiracy about all of that. Nobody decided that we should become a short-term business culture. Somehow Wall Street, computers, who knows, emerged and we became the nation we are, obsessed with numbers and short-term gain.

Now if you're a working guy, and you followed your father into a company as tens of millions have, and you've always believed your kid could do the same—look at what's happened. Businesses have lost the human touch, closed down, and moved to Taiwan, or Korea, or Japan. The ground shifts right under the average worker. These are the things that have been so instrumental in fracturing the American family. There's nothing that's ever made me cry more—because as a kid in the Depression I watched my father and uncles go belly up—than to see a strong, proud man unable to provide for his family. Now, that's happened to so many American families. You couldn't find a better way to destroy the American family.

LANDY: I know that you were really shaken by the L.A. riots. Shortly afterward, I heard Senators John Danforth (R-Mo.) and Bill Bradley (D-N.J.) argue that the media bore some responsibility because of the violence and stereotypes they project. What do the riots tell us about media responsibility?

LEAR: I think they could say that about the *news*, in that every time you see anything terrible going on, you're looking at black or Hispanic kids—largely black kids. And anytime something terrible happens you see it repeated hundreds upon hundreds of times. If a reasonable society plays it 30 times, our society plays it 3,000 times. The media, because it is a business, panders to the bottom line, and so we get all the gratuitous sex and violence. What's good for the shareholders, not everybody else with a stake in it, is what's on their minds.

LANDY: How would you change that?

LEAR: I started something called the Business Enterprise Trust. It helps business realize that it is possible to do good and to do well, and then honors those who do by putting a spotlight on good examples.

LANDY: What does Norman Lear hope the world to remember him for?

LEAR: I'd like to be remembered as being grateful for a great life. An extraordinary life. I am wall-to-wall, ceiling-to-floor grateful. I asked Martin Marty once for the shortest definition he could give me of worship. And he said, "gratitude." I always thought that was terrific. □

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CLINT'S DARK VISION

EASTWOOD'S 'UNFORGIVEN'

> With the Westerner, it is a crucial point of honor *not* to "do it first"; his gun remains in its holster until the moment of combat....The Westerner could not fulfill himself if the moment did not finally come when he can shoot his enemy down. But because that moment is so thoroughly the expression of his being, it must be kept pure. He will not violate the accepted forms of combat though by doing so he could save a city....The Westerner is the last gentleman....
>
> —Robert Warshow, *The Westerner.*

What we see first in *Unforgiven* is a man burying his wife. It's a still, almost painterly shot with the digger a silhouette against a gorgeous golden horizon. Then words scroll up the screen telling us that this man's mother-in-law could never comprehend how any daughter of hers would marry someone like Will Munny, "a man of notoriously vicious and intemperate disposition." We smile at this, for surely Munny will be played by Clint Eastwood and how could any overcivilized mother-in-law be expected to understand Clint as anything but a beast? We know better. Eastwood (even in his urban cop movies) has been for our time what John Wayne and Gary Cooper were for theirs: the Westerner, the justified killer so well described by Warshow. His the scrupulosity in killing; ours the exhilaration in watching the just kill. The mechanics of the Western endorse the hero's violence and thereby absolve us from guilt at enjoying it. We know that the words of *Unforgiven*'s prologue are meant ironically and that the mother-in-law will be refuted.

And, sure enough, Munny-Eastwood is soon characterized as a reformed gunslinger turned pig farmer who is devoted to the memory of the wife who reformed him; who is a teetotaler because his wife had him swear off the stuff; who is an indulgent father who only mildly censures his little boy for cursing; who is a loyal friend to his black comrade, Nate; who refuses to boast of his violent past to a wide-eyed youngster; who resumes gunslinging only to make enough money to save his failing farm and feed his children. We can rest assured that when this man finally reverts to violence it will be only to kill eminently killable varmints in utterly fair fights undertaken in an entirely just cause.

What is that just cause? It is to collect a bounty placed on the heads of two cowboys who have reputedly mutilated a prostitute in a flimsy little simulacrum of a town called Big Whiskey. Its sheriff, Little Bill Daggett, a megalomaniac who is drunk on his power to dispense justice, has only fined the offenders, so the brothel's enraged madam has offered blood money.

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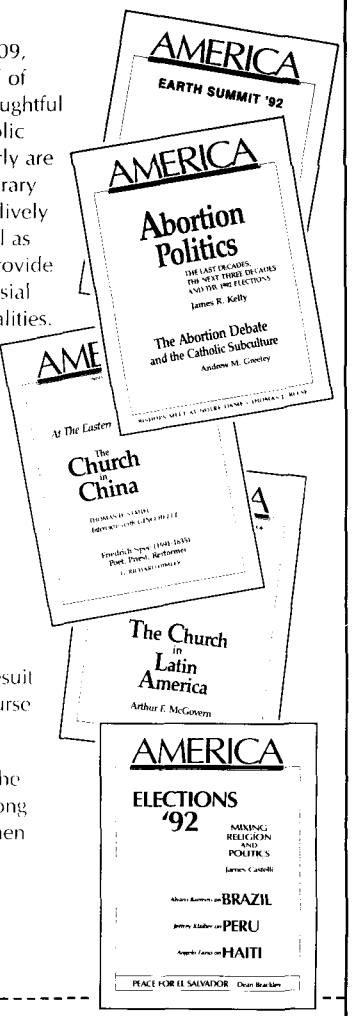

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Eastwood, accompanied by an old pal, Nate, and a young wannabe shootist, the Schofield Kid, takes on the assignment.

But wait. We have seen the knifing of that poor whore and Munny hasn't. One cowboy did indeed scar the girl, but his friend Davy, hardly more than a boy, at first held the girl down, then immediately repented and tried twice to save her from the brute, only to be hurled aside. And, fined in horseflesh (thoroughbred horses surrendered to the brothel's whoremaster), the youth brings an extra mount to the girl herself, hoping that she will forgive his role in the maiming. Surely the honorable Munny won't deliver this repentant, blue-eyed boy to Mr. Death....

But he does. In a superb scene, Munny, perched on a crag, aims very carefully down at Davy, who, disabled with a broken leg, tries to drag himself to the safety of some rocks. Director Eastwood cuts back and forth between an extremely close view of the agonized, crawling body and a medium close-up of Munny coolly, almost meditatively taking aim, missing, aiming again. Finally, a bullet finds the mark and Davy lies dying, pleading for water. His cowboy friends, pinned down by gunfire, are too frightened to succor him. Eastwood stops shooting and cries out, "For God's sake, give him some water. I won't shoot!" And, a moment later, when the cry rings up from the canyon, "You murdering bastards, you killed our Davy boy!" Munny looks not so much remorseful as exhausted, limp, disgusted. What sort of a hero is this?

And what kind of a villain is Sheriff Daggett, whose legal arbitrariness initiates the violence and who is certainly brutal enough to earn our hatred. In Gene Hackman's superb performance, brutality of action is swathed in an avuncularity of manner which somehow makes the action all the more repellent. While quieting down the protesting madam, Daggett softly inquires, "Haven't you seen enough bloodshed, Alice?" but his hand has her wrist in a vise. When he pauses in flogging Nate to interrogate the tortured man, it is with the concerned air of a high school principal calling a truant student on the carpet.

Yet Little Bill is also a brave man who faces armed opponents without flinching; who is genuinely concerned that his wretched little town grow into some semblance of prosperity or even civilization; who is cheerfully and ineptly trying to build a porch onto his house so that he may sit peacefully and enjoy the view; who comically catches a glimpse of immortality when a dime novelist quizzes him on his experiences and opinions. "I do not like assassins or men of low character," Daggett dictates to his cut-rate Boswell and we can almost see his ego swell up like a frog's gullet as he achieves what he considers to be a lapidary phrase. At such times, it's hard to dislike Little Bill. Then he kicks a man's head half in or beats a woman for information and we detest him.

Such balancing and counterpointing of traits is characteristic of David Webb Peoples's complex, dextrous script: the madam is both a caring woman who defends the dignity of her girls, and a screaming harridan who flings clods of mud at the repentant cowboy. Nate is a lovable comrade, a wise counselor, a skillful surgeon—and a man who jumps at the chance to be an assassin because he misses the adventuring of his youth but doesn't realize, until too late, that he no longer has the stomach for killing. Nobody's easy to figure out in this movie.

Clint Eastwood is no longer a surprisingly good director. He has become a master. Every shot expresses the momentary intention of the writer; the visual rhythms are always in sync with the needs of the story. And, since the script is a subtle one, so is the direction subtle. The pimp assures Little Bill that news of the bounty won't reach as far as Texas; then a train's whistle sounds, smoke appears on the horizon, and both men suddenly know that the news *will* carry. The deputies loading their guns in the jailhouse make such a clangor that we think of swords and armor as well as bullets and shotguns. The horrible account of a murder is rendered all the more horrible for being told by a sweet-faced girl.

And what do superb script and direction add up to? I hesitate to call *Unforgiven* the first Calvinist Western because I don't know enough about Calvinism, but somehow the tag sounds right. Supine, shot in the stomach, the wicked villain Daggett looks up into the face of the equally wicked hero Munny and mutters, "I don't deserve to die like this."

"*Deserve* has nothing to do with it," sneers Munny.

"I'll see you in hell, Munny."

"Yeah," agrees the good family man, and proceeds to blow his helpless enemy away.

The mother-in-law was right. Clint Eastwood has turned "the last gentleman" into a monster. RICHARD ALLEVA

STAGE

FALSE NOTES

'FALSETTOS' & 'JAKE'S WOMEN'

"Kiss me as hard as you dare./I have to know that you're there."Count Vronsky sang those lines—or lines very like them—to Anna Karenina when, no longer able to contain her supposedly seething passion, she turned up at his apartment. This lyric was the ludicrous high point of a new musical that makes a foolish hash of Tolstoy's novel. Thus the new theater season limpingly began. There seems little reason to dwell on this disaster although one might wonder what it was doing at the Circle in the Square and why so much grant money went into the making of it. I will turn instead to two holdovers from last season—at least, they are holding on as I write this—which I did not review when they were new.

Falsettos is a Broadway musical that William Finn and James Lapine put together from their earlier, short off-Broadway pieces, *March of the Falsettos* (1981) and *Falsettoland* (1990). I postponed going to the new show because *Falsettoland*, which I reviewed in these pages (December 21, 1990) was so relentlessly lively that it seemed to trivialize both the coming-of-age play (Jason's accepting his father's homosexuality and

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the death of Whizzer, his father's lover) and the AIDS context in which the action takes place. I did not see *March of the Falsettos* in its initial production. For that reason, I was unprepared for the force of the first act of *Falsettos*, which is presumably *March* reborn. Surprisingly, since it dates from the innocent gay days before AIDS was clearly perceived as the horror it has become, the first act is darker, tougher, funnier, more inventive than the later work. The titular "March of the Falsettos," an eerie, almost expressionistic number, is at once comic and frightening. Running through the act is the insistence that love can be as painful as it is fulfilling. This can be seen not only in the often frenetic company numbers, but in "I'm Breaking Down," a solo for Trina, who loses Marvin to Whizzer, and in Whizzer's "The Games I Play." It is an atmosphere in which the confusion of the adults (Marvin, Whizzer, Trina, Marvin's psychiatrist Mendel, who courts Trina), their distrust of and compulsion about commitment, makes Jason's adjustment all the more difficult.

Although "Father to Son," the curtain number of the first act, suggests that Jason is beginning to sort out his problems and that Marvin is less of an aging adolescent than he usually seems, the play—if it stopped here—would remain open-ended, carrying the suggestion of complexity that marks most of the act. But *Falsettos* moves on to the second act, and the chirpiness of *Falsettoland* takes over. The troubled five characters of the first act are joined by a cheerful lesbian couple who are there mostly for laughs, although they sound the first AIDS warning in "Something Bad Is Happening." The tone—despite Whizzer's death—is noticeably upbeat and not simply in the Jason plot. Perhaps that is why the show has caught on with such a large and diverse audience. On the train from Philadelphia the other day, a suburban couple exchanged information with a group of equally suburban ladies and all of them were on their way to see *Falsettos*. Their grandmothers would have been on the way to see the Lunts in *O Mistress Mine*. I have no quarrel with the success of *Falsettos*, but the first act suggests that Finn and Lapine could have produced a more sardonic work. Even the last moment here, Mendel's return to "Welcome to Falsettoland" which opens the act, is almost a throwaway line, not quite casting a retrospective irony over the act's sprightliness as happened with *Fasettoland* when I first saw it.

Jake's Women is another of those Neil Simon plays, like *Chapter Two*, in which bits of autobiography adhere to an uneasy mixture of comedy and soap opera. Jake is a writer (novels not plays) who conjures up his women—his present wife, his dead wife, his daughter at two different ages, his sister, his psychiatrist—and creates the scenes he plays with them. It is presumably a form of therapy which will allow him to save his second marriage by putting his first one to rest. There is a running gag about his writing their lines, even when they appear to break away from their potted speeches to puncture him with sharp one-liners. In other hands and with other intentions, the device might have been able to play philosophically with the creative process and with the way imagination impinges on reality. Here it is little more than a gimmick, one that quickly grows tiresome, and neither Jake nor his women, as he and we see them, have much substance. The appeal of the play probably lies in the fact that Alan Alda is playing Jake with the self-deprecating sincerity for which he is celebrated. I kept waiting to hear the choppers coming in so that the characters could scramble into action and do something more important than chatter about Jake's ersatz angst.

GERALD WEALES

Anne Porter

Autumn Crocus

Some of the leaves
Are falling early
But there are glinting
Dragonflies
Hornets in windfalls
And a brown honey-bee
Searching about
In the surviving roses

The summer birds
Are just beginning
Their autumn journeys

We watch
Their clustered flocks
Unraveling in the sky
And always rising

Until they trail away
As small as gnats
And higher than the sun

We watch them out of sight
The air
Is drained of summer

We're left behind
With apple-scented nights
With carillons of crickets
With planets bright
As the Nativity

And this new air
Whose coolness is itself
A kind of fragrance

And now the earth
Breathes out the unearthly blossoms
Of autumn crocus
Around the tool-shed door.

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First world blames third

THE NATURE OF DEVELOPMENT
Roger Stone
Alfred A. Knopf, $23, 286 pp.

INTERNATIONAL BANKS AND THE ENVIRONMENT
Raymond Mikesell and Lawrence Williams
Sierra Club Books, $30, 302 pp.

John Feffer

Nothing challenges our contemporary notions of progress more thoroughly than the dual deterioration of the environment and the third world. Periodically, we try to exorcise these demons—on Earth Day, at glamour rock concerts such as BandAid, or at the recent international summit in Rio de Janeiro. Yet, for all the media attention and public concern, the problems remain. Worse, they get worse. The globe becomes increasingly dirtied while the Southern Hemisphere falls further behind its Northern, more prosperous half.

Until recently, these two modern crises were relatively unconnected. The traditional programs for third-world development, from both the Right and the Left, were predicated on growth that either trickled prosperity down or spread it more evenly around. Ecological purists, on the other hand, scorned the dismal science's emphasis on growth, arguing that small is beautiful, that humans must do as little as possible to disrupt nature's fragile balance, that the planet might indeed do better without us and our incessant need to consume and expand.

Lately, the lines separating Greens and development thinkers have blurred considerably. Nowhere has this merger been more pronounced than in the debate on "sustainable development." At its most radical, this conceptual framework provides for both incremental improvements in the developing world and the preservation of threatened ecosystems, and challenges as well the unholy trinity responsible for global toxicity and third-world decay: corporations, multilateral banks, and wasteful governments. At its least radical, sustainable development manages to incorporate some of the more original insights without posing any serious threats to the very institutions responsible for the appalling condition of the present world order.

Roger Stone falls into this latter category. A former banker and more recent Green devotee, Stone is uniquely poised to fuse development economics and ecologism in a manner palatable to the rightward-drifting mainstream. His recent book, *The Nature of Development*, is an attempt to fashion a new hybrid orthodoxy that does for sustainable development what Bill Clinton has done for the Democratic party—a moderate make-over for the 1990s.

Not that his book, produced under the generally stodgy auspices of the Council on Foreign Relations, is without merit. Employing an elevated *National Geographic* style, Stone takes us on a tour of several exotic locales, giving evocative snapshots of unusual fauna and even providing miniprofiles of a dozen or so committed activists around the world. He paints many vivid and satisfying portraits: the vigilant motorcycle patrols around Thailand's Khao Yai National Park by park ranger Nikhom Putta, the often quixotic attempts to cultivate sea moss by the Savannes Bay fishermen on the Caribbean island of St. Lucia, the commitment of British zoologist John Parrott to Cameroon's Korup National Park.

In a field burdened by jargon and the most wooden of prose, it is certainly refreshing to encounter a book to be enjoyed and not simply cited, to read of particular struggles and impassioned actors instead of abstract policy prescriptions. It is more refreshing still that Stone takes seriously the advice of the grassroots activists he interviews. Following from this advice, he even goes so far as to criticize the crushing problem of the debt crisis, the pitfalls of harmonizing downward through GATT and other trade liberalizations, and the woeful temporizing of recent U.S. administrations on foreign-aid questions. Finally, Stone does not shrink from the hard questions, the either/ors and double binds and Gordian knots confronting the projects he visits. But after exploring the classic growth versus ecological protection tradeoff, he offers instead "synergies" by which both goals are accommodated.

Truly is Roger Stone a penitent banker, the financial world's equivalent of the "penitent butchers" who first bagged and stuffed game and then only later, in a fit of remorse, formed Britain's Fauna Protection Society. Yet, for all his penitence—demonstrated by liberal handwringing over ballooning debt and declining aid—Stone remains a banker at heart, wedded to certain assumptions concerning how the world is and should be.

Chief among these assumptions is a residual blame-the-victim mentality. In *The Nature of Development*, farmers tear up virgin forest to plant soil-exhausting crops, fishermen overtax their waters, and rural dwellers constantly procreate, thus condemning their offspring to ever-diminishing natural resources. The third world, then, deserves the lion's share of the responsibility for its own predicament.

While the nations, institutions, and peoples of the third world are by no means blameless with regard to either their economies or their ecosystems, they

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can operate only within structures determined to a large degree by the industrial powers, multinational corporations, and international banks. Stone certainly acknowledges the sins of the first world (although with less emphasis on U.S. failings). But these sins he locates primarily in the past: banks have since become more committed to smaller development projects, corporations have discovered eco-friendly policies, and even former Mobil attorney William Nitze makes an appearance near the end of the book as an enviro-convert. Sure, mistakes are still being made, but the first world is making good faith efforts, all according to sound market principles. In return, guided by their own thousand points of light, the already sacrificing peoples of the third world must make further economic sacrifices for the sake of the globe.

No surprise, then, that Stone treats contemptuously third-world claims that the new environmental voices coming from the North are simply the old colonial hegemony in new garb. Regardless of the stated intentions of first-world leaders—and for the sake of argument, let us assume, the Bush administration aside, that these leaders are sincere—the new environmental policies being dictated to the third world must coexist with the disastrous terms of trade disparity between the hemispheres and the enormous hard currency transfers northward required by debt repayment. With these economic realities left untouched by the modest changes in the banking and corporate sectors, perceptions of Green neo-colonialism will continue.

Stone is by no means alone in his conservative, market-oriented approach. A good portion of the mainstream environmental movement is moving in the same direction. Take, for instance, the Sierra Club's latest offering in the field, *International Banks and the Environment.* Laden with appendices and leaden in presentation, this book by economist Raymond Mikesell and environmentalist Lawrence Williams provides much of the technical background that Stone's work lacks. Yet, it too fails to offer more than a minimal response to what are proving to be the post-cold war era's most pressing issues.

Outlining the new approach to the environment by multilateral lending banks—generally the World Bank and its regional counterparts (the IMF has remained remarkably resistant to environmentalism)—Mikesell and Williams give colorless but useful descriptions of current bank-funded undertakings from the Narmada River Project in India to the Polonoreste Resettlement Project in Brazil. Most of these efforts have had considerable negative impact on the environment because the World Bank has, for the most part, lacked the proper staff for handling environmental questions, neglected to require environmental impact assessments, and consistently failed to incorporate "social costs" into its accounting methods.

Mikesell and Williams inevitably fall prey to the same prejudices as Stone. Here too free markets are an economic panacea, the peoples of the third world are mostly to blame for their predicament, and the first world has no special responsibility for redesigning the current multilateral institutions to distribute power more evenly

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around the globe. Reading the Sierra Club's account and nothing else, one would never know that structural adjustment programs—designed by the banks and predicated on trickle-down precepts—brought enormous suffering to the third-world in the 1980s, precipitating riots in Venezuela, Argentina, Peru, Egypt, and elsewhere.

Why the kid gloves, the reluctance to bank bash, the hesitation to criticize the powerful? Roger Stone and the Sierra Club authors are not, after all, pollyannas. Stone does not try to argue that third-world development has progressed much in the past couple decades. Mikesell and Williams certainly do not attempt to place the World Bank and its affiliates in the ecological vanguard. Yet, in both cases, the authors have muted their criticisms and made much of the third world's own inadequacies. Is this simply the politesse of the pundit set? More telling perhaps are the links between the mainstream environmental movement and multinational corporations. The World Wildlife Fund, for instance, where Stone is a Senior Fellow and past vice-president, received donations in 1991 of over $50,000 from both Chevron and Exxon, two notorious polluters. In *The Nature of Development,* corporations such as Scott Paper, Coca-Cola, and DuPont receive favorable reviews; no multinationals are criticized by name.

For all their reluctance to challenge powerful vested interests, Stone, Mikesell, and Williams have nevertheless brought a good deal of thought to bear on the intersection of development and the environment. And such thinking is sorely needed if our deteriorating communities and tattered ecological fabric are to be mended. If there is to be any meaning left to the notion of progress—measured by the improved prosperity of the world's people and the improved health of the people's world—then we must indeed, to use Stone's language, think synergetically.

But if the institutions that have made a mess of the previous world order are not remade radically to reflect these new synergetic principles, then the messages of Stone and company—however appealing the grassroots rhetoric—will simply represent antiquated development thinking: recycled, repackaged, and still brought to you by the same old sponsors. □

INNOCENTS AT HOME & ABROAD

GRAND ILLUSIONS
Critics and Champions of the American Century
John Judis
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $25, 344 pp.

Francis Flaherty

A test. Which president said this and when: The United States "possess[es] the strength and the will to bear the burden of world leadership....Through strength of example and commitment we lead....Our example reshapes the world." And, shortly later: "I have no doubt America will transform the world. We begin with the free market, the powerhouse of ingenuity. Free markets and free people breathe life into the American dream."

Is this Teddy Roosevelt, speaking as the United States dawned as a world economic power? Is this Harry Truman, asserting our nation's premier place in the postwar world?

Neither. It's George Bush, speaking in 1991 as if the cold war hadn't ended, as if the U.S. economy were not in indisputable decline, and as if the bipolar superpower world were not now multipolar. Castigated for his famous dismissal of "the vision thing," George Bush in fact is caught in the throes of a compelling vision. The problem is that the vision is out-of-date: The captain of our ship of state has an obsolete map, and in such cases the nation will surely founder.

This, the frequent failure of our leaders' vision in the twentieth century, is the main theme of John Judis's rewarding book and the "grand illusion" of its title. A veteran journalist, Judis has examined the political perceptions of fourteen leading politicians and intellectuals, including *New Republic* founder Herbert Croly, Walter Lippmann, Whittaker Chambers, William Fulbright, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush. Each is the subject of a mini-biography, including not only an intellectual and political profile but a psychological one as well. A liberal perspective unites these varied topics; conservatives will find much to criticize. And, in my opinion, they have their work cut out for them.

While Judis analyzes domestic policy to some extent, foreign policy is the heart of the work. The central topic therein, of course, is the rise and decline of the cold war, and how our leaders have answered all the subsidiary questions involved: What is the nature of the Soviet Union? What are the interplay and relative strengths of nationalism and communism in the third world? As they recover from World War II, what roles will Japan, Germany, and Western Europe take in geopolitics? What will the post-cold-war thaw mean for the United States?

Some leaders had 20-20 vision. In a 1971 speech in Kansas City, for example, Richard Nixon floated five global propositions: the cold war is ending; economic competition will replace military competition among nations; the United States is declining from its postwar predominance; the bipolar world is giving way to a multipolar one; and as international economic competition grows, U.S. relations with its cold war allies will become uneasy.

Prophetic, no? Nixon and Henry Kissinger eventually faltered over Vietnam, of course, but at least they saw the world clearly. Much the same can be said about Lyndon Johnson. But, Judis says, this is emphatically not so with Ronald Reagan and George Bush, who won and retained the White House with an "imperial nostalgia" that has blinded the nation to new world realities. Knowing the power of wishful thinking, Reagan and Bush simply denied that America was on the decline. This grand illusion—some might say delusion—led to absurdities. As Mikhail Gorbachev was dismantling the Warsaw

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Pact, for instance, National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft was announcing on television that "the cold war is not over."

What fosters such lack of vision? All the limits that humans are heir to, Judis answers, from emotional need (Whittaker Chambers) to the enchantment of nostalgia (Ronald Reagan) to a paucity of reflectiveness (George Bush) to the seductiveness of simple ideas (various intellectuals). Judis tells us too about those with strong vision, people like columnist Walter Lippmann and Arkansas Senator J. William Fulbright, both of whom sharply decried the simplistic good-versus-evil reading of the cold war.

For Judis, the sad current state of U.S. leadership contrasts greatly with the start of the American Century. In the early 1900s, the world was also in flux. The United States was growing from an agrarian nation to an industrial power, and Britain's longtime world dominance was receding. Old U.S. approaches, such as isolationism, just didn't make sense anymore. Fortunately, the nation and its leaders, like Teddy Roosevelt, were perceptive enough to see these truths. Not so now, says Judis.

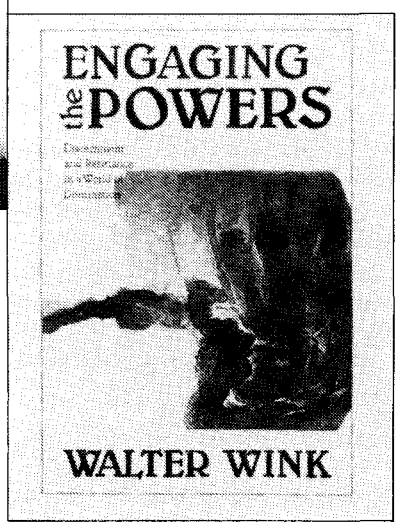
"The difference between Roosevelt and Bush is, unfortunately, the difference between the beginning and the end of the American Century," he writes. "At the beginning of this century, Americans grasped, however imperfectly, the novelty of their situation and attempted to come to terms with it....In the last decades of the century, Americans fell prey to nostalgia.... They nourished illusions about the power of the market and about America's standing in the world....But if we want to halt our nation's descent, we, like the Americans of the progressive era, will have to recognize the difference between style and substance and reality and illusion."

A rich book, *Grand Illusions* offers much more than foreign policy analysis. Judis scrutinizes U.S. domestic policy, too, from Henry Wallace's pioneering New Deal farm price supports to Congress's 1979 Chrysler bailout, with particular attention to the ebb and flow of the laissez faire and mixed-economy approaches. The reader also gets a feel for the lineage of ideas. For instance, Whittaker Chambers took a religious view of the cold war as a struggle between "two rival faiths." This image deeply impressed Ronald Reagan, whose similar formulation tagged the Soviet Union as the "evil empire" and endured well into George Bush's presidency.

And Judis gives the reader his due of political tidbits. For example, we learn that Barry Goldwater said NATO field commanders should have the right to use nuclear weapons. And Henry Wallace, a progressive visionary, may have been a bit too visionary when he visited Siberia in 1944 and came back gushing about how he saw the future and how wonderfully it worked. Turns out he saw a slave-labor camp, cleverly masked for his tour.

Indeed, the book may be too rich. Spanning a century, *Grand Illusions* is both an intellectual history and a political history, of matters both foreign and domestic, with psychobiographies as well. I would have trimmed the subject matter a bit—but that is an editorial quibble. More important is that this fairly well-done book is also a must-read book as the elections loom. This nation is at a critical crossroads, and Judis makes a compelling albeit partisan argument that its leaders are several miles back down the highway. □

WALTER WINK



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SUBSIDIARITY FOREVER

REVIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM
The Economy, the States, and the Federal Government
Alice Rivlin
The Brookings Institution, $15.95, 196 pp.

Fred Siegel

There is no better way to clear out a cocktail party than to talk about federalism. Still, the assumptions that go into ordering the relationships among the different layers—federal, state, and local—of the American government remain fundamental to democracy. Boring though it may be, conjuring up as it does the claustrophobia of a long-ago classroom captivity, federalism is a topic as important as it is unavoidable. Federalism invariably shapes the issues of an era even as it is in turn reshaped by them. Like a marriage, in a federal union you have to repeatedly renegotiate the relationship. The constitutional bargain of 1787 hammered out after long months of wrangling between centralists and decentralists was renegotiated first in response to slavery during the Civil War, and again through Roosevelt's response to the Great Depression. Now new voices argue that the internationalization of the economy compels yet another reconstitution.

Alice Rivlin, the founding director of the Congressional Budget Office, a self-described "fanatical, card-carrying middle-of-the-roader," and now one of the most widely respected thinkers in Washington, argues that it is again time to fundamentally reorganize the distribution of governmental tasks. In *Reviving the American Dream*, Rivlin suggests that "both federal and state governments would function better," and the economy could be successfully reorganized to meet the challenge of international competition, "if a cleaner distinction were made" between federal and state responsibilities.

In the classic conceptualization of federalism, elaborated by Alexander Hamilton in *Federalist 31*, separate layers of government were to have separate powers over separate purses. In this layer cake ideal, "A government ought to contain in itself every power requisite to the full accomplishment of the objects committed to its care...." With the New Deal and the civil rights revolution we shifted from Hamilton's "layer cake federalism" to "marble cake federalism." Federal and state policy became intertwined as the states became "the errand boys" of a federal government whose success in combating the Depression at home and dangers abroad legitimated its extended authority to take on racial injustice. But despite the initial successes, confusion now reigns as the different levels of government are, at considerable economic and political cost, hopelessly jumbled.

Rivlin doesn't mention it but consider the case of the New Orleans Housing Authority. It's typical of the nation's most troubled housing authorities. Despite the desperate poverty of their clients, these authorities have been unable to spend more than $1.6 billion of the federal dollars allocated to them. In New Orleans, which has been unable to spend $61.5 million, funding and building regulations come from the feds, but the mayor of New Orleans appoints the housing authority's governing board while the authority's employees are state workers operating under state civil service rules. The upshot is endless squabbling in which the dilapidated housing flows from a dilapidated political process which confuses authority and accountability to the detriment of public confidence.

Similarly, the mixture of federal, state, and local involvement in education affords officials at every level plausible denial for the failure of what are mistakenly called school "systems." The only thing that's systematic in most cities is the nonaccountability built into schools which are less single organizations than accretions of federal and state programs scrambled by federal court orders and then folded into fief-like local school boards.

The New Deal case for first concentrating power in Washington and then expanding it to areas like education rested positively on the presumed expertise of technocratic decision-makers and negatively on the assumption that state government was necessarily backward and racist. Neither assumption, Rivlin argues persuasively, still holds. While Washington is paralyzed by the posturing of interest groups, each of which has its own stable of adversarial experts, state government has been organizationally updated and racially integrated.

Although she doesn't use the term, Rivlin is making the case for what the 1930s Catholic critics of modernity known as distributists called "subsidiarity," the notion that whenever possible power should be delegated downwards, "not arrogated upwards." According to the distributists, government works best when it engages people's energies on the local level. To that end Rivlin wants to get the already overburdened federal government out of "education, housing, highways, social services, economic development, and job training."

The states, she says, "should take charge of the primary public investment needed to increase productivity and raise income," especially education and the infrastructure. The federal government should focus on our increasingly complex international economic relations and social insurance,

REVIEWERS

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including the development of a national health insurance.

This is more than a pie-in-the-sky proposition. Rivlin proposes an innovative method of taxation, what she calls "common shared taxes," to facilitate the transfer of responsibilities. State taxation, which once varied wildly from state to state, has now converged around a common mix of income, sales, and property taxes. Rivlin would complete the convergence. Under one version of "common-shared taxes" modeled on the relationship between the German "Lander" and Berlin, the federal government would serve as a collection agency for taxes imposed not by Washington but agreed upon by the states themselves.

"Common-shared taxes" initiated by agreement among the states would serve two important functions. First, they would get Washington out of the business of using federal mandates to micromanage local policy. Second, by creating a guaranteed tax base the states would be encouraged to compete with each other, not by offering tax giveaways but by underwriting what Rivlin calls the "productivity agenda" of upgrading industrial jobs skills and enhancing the infrastructure. The states are also best positioned, she argues, to implement an "industrial policy," the government tactic of encouraging cutting-edge industries so successfully employed by the Japanese. Within the welter of Washington's warring interests, it will never be possible to agree on which industries to support, while on the state level there is more likely to be a consensus on which possibilities ought to be promoted.

Reviving the American Dream is a deceptively modest book. Brief and straightforward, it goes to the heart of debate over American decline by going to the heart of our political and thus our economic arrangements. In the language of David Osborne's *Reinventing Government*, it shows how by re-sorting the powers assigned to the different levels of government we can get a federal government that does a better job of "steering," that is, setting overall policy, while letting the states go about the business of "rowing," providing the practical services on which our productivity rests. □

LIKE A SEPTIC TANK

CARNIVAL CULTURE
The Trashing of Taste in America
James B. Twitchell
Columbia University Press, $24.95, 306 pp.

Michael O. Garvey

If you blindfolded yourself and threw a brick into a crowd of typical North American college students (as you really should sometime), you'd be more likely to injure a Nintendo enthusiast than a devoted reader of Paul Claudel. Nowhere in *Carnival Culture*, an absorbing study of the triumph of the barbarians, is this specific experiment recommended, but its predictable outcome is the sort of thing the reader is invited to lament.

Which—let's face it—makes for a lot of fun, especially for us suburban white trash types who thought *Terminator 2* was garbage but had to admit that the opening scene was great, and who can't afford cable TV but don't mind watching it from a bar stool every once in a while. Members of the cultural elite denounced by Vice-President Dan Quayle will find in *Carnival Culture* a thriller of social criticism, and in James B. Twitchell a writer almost as entertaining as Stephen King (who, the reader will learn, is one of three authors who wrote ten of the thirteen novels selling 1 million or more copies during the last decade. The other two are Danielle Steele and Tom Clancy. The book is loaded with wonderfully depressing information like that).

For an academic, a professor of English at the University of Florida, Twitchell writes vividly and well, and when he occasionally uses a word like "hebephrenic" to describe something like a McDonald's commercial, you figure that he just can't help himself. Exhaustive research of pop culture is impossible because the thing is, like a septic tank, continually replenished. Still, it's difficult to believe that anyone, academic or otherwise, has studied our collective daydream as thoroughly.

An enjoyable, if disorienting, feature of the book is Twitchell's "taxonomy of taste" with people, ideas, and specific works presented in descending order through the categories of High Culture, Popular Culture, and Low Culture (which overlaps with Popular Culture). The marriage of Donald and Ivana Trump is the meridian bisecting popular culture, with Mrs. Trump at the bottom of the top and Mr. Trump at the top of the bottom. But at the tiptop is "abstract expressionism" (outranking Blake's Prophetic Books and "some French philosopher you've never heard of") and at the very bottom is "truck/tractor pulls" (presumably more despicable than Geraldo Rivera, Phil Donahue, and the happy face). That "deconstruction" ranks anywhere at all in the taxonomy is pretty silly, but to rank it above "King Lear," let alone The Super Bowl, is outrageous. But Twitchell is, after all, an academic. Best of all, he's an academic writing about show business, promising to examine "how the organizations of production and transmission evolved into their current conglomerated forms and what this portends for the future." That's right. We're talking morbid delectation in every medium you can think of.

"We call whatever is vulgar, junk," he

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FALL BOOKS

writes. "We also use this term to describe the most potent narcotic (heroin) and its users (junkies), a particularly potent and annoying kind of marketing (junk mail—now junk phone calls), a favorite diet of empty calories (junk food), and even a method of risky financing (junk bonds). The current (since the 1960s) use of the word 'junk' demonstrates how ambivalent we have become." If Twitchell is ambivalent about junk, he's certainly an expert on the arcana of the rapacious market which so ingeniously turns out the paperback books, movies, and TV networks. In one paragraph, for instance, the reader learns that the Disney Company charges $20,000 to place a brand product in the background of one of its movies; that for $40,000 the product will be mentioned in the script; that for $60,000 it will be consumed on screen; that Philip Morris paid $350,000 to have James Bond smoke Lark cigarettes in *License to Kill*; and that the movie *Days of Thunder* included more than seventy such "product placements," most notably one for the sugar substitute Sweet 'n Low which involved Tom Cruise's tongue and Nicole Kidman's thigh. And did you know that cable television bills are paid more promptly by most people than their utility bills? And that Mel Brooks retorted "Bullshit!" to the suggestion that he was vulgar?

Twitchell is as alarmed as you'd expect an academic to be about the onslaught on America's leisured and literate masses, and he wonders about the relationship between democracy and schlock, but his chief indictment of the vulgarians seems merely to be that they are so...well, so vulgar. Which they are, of course, but considerably more than that needs to be said.

The annoying thing about your average culture critic, as Walker Percy suggested in these very pages thirty-three years ago, is what he or she won't talk about. The critic will deliver all sorts of dreadful news about how the culture is going to hell but not a suggestion about where it was before beginning the descent. In the name of what, you wonder, is this indictment being made? The critic will never say much more than some vague thing or other about some books and music and pictures everyone used to admire, or at least respect. My hunch is that this shyness, this boorish fear of absolutes, is precisely the reason that most critics of Twitchell's stature can't do much more than catalogue the collapse. You can sit around all day making lists of encroaching crap, and this is fun as far as it goes, but finally not very satisfying.

But the critic who wrote *Carnival Culture*, if timid about what makes life worth living, is confident, even swaggering, when it comes to religious belief, an area in which he, like so many others in his guild, is color blind, tone deaf, and triumphally illiterate. "An apt analogy for American show business might be the Holy Roman Catholic church of the early Renaissance," he writes. "The church's great power was its willingness to pay attention to its audience and to provide a steady stream of images that were comforting and inspiring." All right, but where does he think that willingness (and so that power) came from? And why does he think that those images were comforting and inspiring?

To dismiss such questions is to sign on with the Visigoths, which seems a lamentable thing for a culture critic to do. When Twitchell writes "like religion, television addresses our deepest concerns by first distorting them," the reader may be forgiven for wondering how a sensibility so deadened to matters of belief can recognize anything worth celebrating, defending, or enjoying in culture.

G.K. Chesterton, not a bad culture critic himself, once remarked that the young man knocking on the brothel door is looking for God. He might have said the same of the zit-faced channel surfer, or, for that matter, of the feminist assistant professor at the Modern Language Association convention. It's difficult to imagine what Chesterton would make of Twitchell's conclusion that "the mass-mediated world is worthy of our impassioned study lest Oscar Wilde's prediction [*sic*] prove true: 'The brotherhood of man is not a mere poet's dream: it is a most depressing and humiliating reality.'" But Twitchell would be a more interesting culture critic if he understood that Wilde's epigram is not a prediction and that is what makes it funny. □

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

An immeasurable gulf

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: The Catholics active or passive in the new Reformation probably all believe in the apostolic character of the church and the primacy of Peter, but draw the line at Matthew 16:19 ["I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be

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"Your sermon won't touch on the subject of contraception, will it?"

loosed in heaven"]. They are infected with the secular virus of liberty, of the ordination and exaltation of freedom as absolute.

Thus among the modern Reformers will be found Catholics for a Free Choice (i.e., for abortion), Catholics for the Latin Mass, and other cults, but, more massively, millions of Catholics—like Marilyn Kramer [Correspondence, June 19], who put down *Humanae vitae*, who espouse or practice artificial birth control—together with many priests who counsel them to follow their own consciences rather than follow the decree of the church. The pockmark of the first Reformation reappears as the exaltation of individual freedom and personal interpretation.

Ms. Kramer would surely agree with Raymond F. Roberts, Jr., whose letter abuts hers, that "it is pure casuistry to propose that a couple who use Natural Family Planning to avoid conception are more 'justified' than another couple who use different methods for the same purpose."

But this is not an example of casuistry. The contraceptive couple say, We want sex, here and now, in this fertile period, but we want to avoid conception and we will do everything in our power to prevent it. The couple who accept the church's dictum that contraception is intrinsically evil and practice NFP say, We want sex here and now, in this fertile period, but we will forgo that pleasure and for the time being abstain; we agree with *Humanae vitae* that "every marriage act must be open to the transmission of life."

There is an immeasurable gulf between these two positions. One is indulgent, the other abstemious. The sexually indulgent spouse who says "I will not be denied" comes across as turning away from the one who said his follower "must deny his very self." I know it is not easy, but "Can you drink the cup...?" is not a rose garden offer. Christian freedom is not secular freedom. "Remember that you have been called to live in freedom, but not a freedom that gives free rein to the flesh....You should...not yield to the cravings of the flesh" [Gal 5:13-18].

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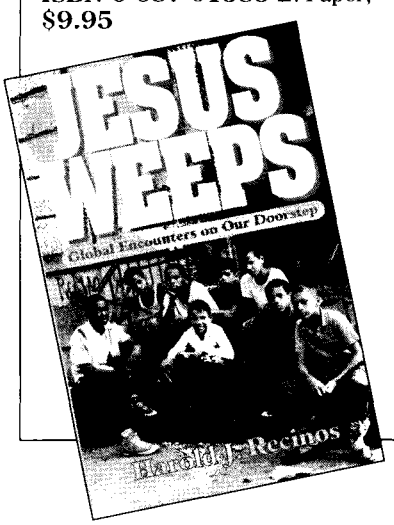

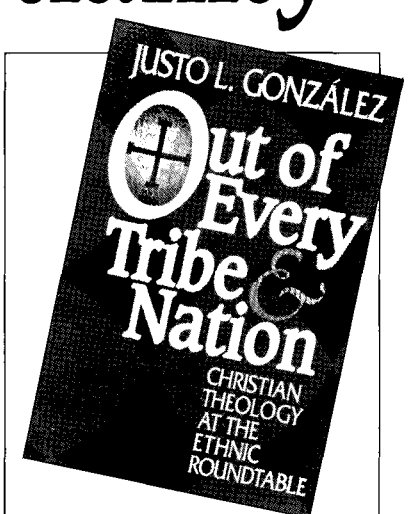

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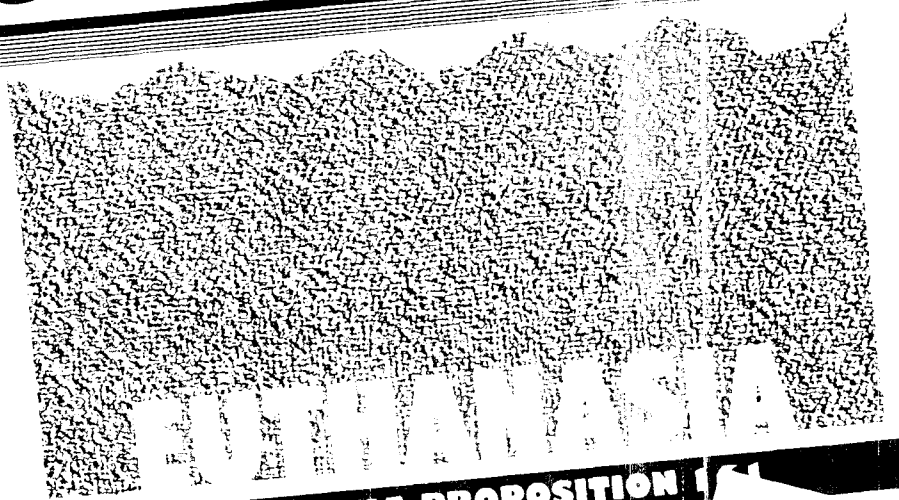

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